



## Preparing for your Annual Exam

The type of annual exam you have is based upon your age. Student Health Services follows the guidelines endorsed by both the [American Cancer Society](#), [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#), and the [United States Preventative Services Task Force](#), when providing care. **Pap testing (cervical cancer screening) is no longer routinely recommended for under age 21, nor is it recommended annually over age 21.**

- 20 years of age and younger, who have never had an abnormal Pap test:  
Annual exam consists of a breast exam, general physical exam from the waist up, urine testing for chlamydia/gonorrhea, and blood testing for HIV and syphilis. A pelvic (gynecological) exam is only necessary if there are symptoms of vaginal discharge, abdominal pain, irregular vaginal bleeding, genital sores or bumps, or other reproductive system concerns.
- 21 and over who have never had an abnormal Pap test:  
Annual exam consists of a breast exam, general physical exam from the waist up, urine testing for chlamydia/gonorrhea, and blood testing for HIV and syphilis. Pap testing is performed every 3 years. A pelvic (gynecological) exam is only necessary when Pap testing is performed, or if there are symptoms of vaginal discharge, abdominal pain, irregular vaginal bleeding, genital sores or bumps, or other reproductive system concerns.
- If being followed, due to an abnormal Pap result or undergoing treatment for an abnormal Pap:  
Annual exams, as well as repeat Pap testing, will be at the recommendation of your health care provider.

Preparation for your appointment is very important to ensure an accurate exam and lab results. **If you will need a pelvic (gynecological) exam and/or Pap testing, do not have sexual intercourse, use vaginal creams, douches, or tampons for 24 hours prior to your appointment.** If your period begins or you are experiencing vaginal bleeding on the day of your appointment, you should reschedule.

Do not urinate for at least 1 hour prior to your appointment to enable an accurate urine sample to be collected.

### ***What to expect during your annual appointment***

After you check in, a member of our staff will take your weight, blood pressure, pulse, and temperature; we will also ask you a few questions about your health and any problems you are experiencing. Some of the questions may seem personal, like those related to your menstrual period, any birth control use, whether you are sexually active, or if you have ever been pregnant.



While these questions may make you uncomfortable, they are very important to the health care provider who will do your exam. HIV testing will also be discussed, as we encourage routine HIV testing for all patients during reproductive health visits. It is important to tell the nursing staff member about any problems you are experiencing, so we may communicate those issues to the provider who will perform your exam. After the nurse has obtained the necessary information, you will be asked to wait in the lobby while another staff member prepares the exam room for your provider.

You will be given a urine cup for collection of your chlamydia/gonorrhea test and be shown to the bathroom. After you provide your urine sample, you will go back to the exam room when the provider is ready to see you. You will be given a paper gown and asked to either completely undress (for a pelvic/gynecological exam) or undress just from the waist up. The provider will come in, talk with you briefly, and then perform a physical examination. Pelvic exams are performed using a speculum, which is an instrument that opens the vagina and enables the provider to examine the cervix and take any necessary lab samples. Depending on the type of visit, and what kind of symptoms you are having, the provider may also perform a bimanual exam (the provider inserts 2 fingers into the patient's vagina while also palpating the abdomen, checking for ovarian irregularities). A breast exam will also be performed.

The provider will explain your plan of care, instruct you on how to obtain any lab results from tests performed, and may counsel you on preventive health measures such as safe sex, contraception, smoking cessation, weight management, or stress reduction. If you desire birth control, you and the provider will discuss what method would work best for you and then you will obtain a prescription. You will then usually end your visit in our lab having your blood taken for HIV/syphilis testing.

\*\*\*If you have never been on birth control but would like for a SHS provider to prescribe it for you, you must also view the Health Issues Class presentation on our website prior to your appointment and submit your name/Banner ID at the end of the presentation. This is a one time only requirement, and viewing it is not necessary if you have been on birth control in the past.\*\*\*

Have a general question about Pap tests or gynecological exams? Feel free to ask! E-mail us at [gotquestions@ecu.edu](mailto:gotquestions@ecu.edu).