Is it okay to have a Pap test during your period? [1]

Dear Alice,

Can having a Pap test during menstruation have effects on the result? I've heard not to get one during this period. Can it cause abnormal results? Why is this?

Thanks, Curious

Answer
Dear Curious,

What you've heard is correct: typically, women are encouraged to schedule Pap tests when they are not on their menstrual periods. The test can be performed during your period, but is not preferable, because, as you indicated, any menstrual blood collected with the sample may interfere with the test results. Along those lines, it's also good to be aware that there are a few additional factors to avoid prior to getting a Pap test so that accurate results may be obtained.

More specifically, it's recommended that women schedule their Pap test about 10 to 20 days after the first day of their periods. So, when scheduling a gynecological appointment, it's good to have the dates of the last menstrual period in mind. Keeping track on a calendar might be worth considering as well.

When preparing for an upcoming Pap test, there are a few other items and activities to avoid to ensure that the results received from the test are as accurate as possible. Beginning two days prior to a scheduled Pap test, it's best to avoid:

- Using tampons
- Using vaginally-inserted medications, lubricants, or creams
- Douching
- Using any feminine sprays or powders in the genital area
- Having sex

Any number of these factors may result in an incorrect reading of the Pap test. So, perhaps this response can serve as a pre-appointment checklist to prep for a Pap! Yearning for more information on this gynecological exam? Then don't forget to check out the related Q&As.

Wishing all the best when prepping for a Pap test,

Alice!

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