



Cervical screening and MRKH

If I don't have a cervix, why do I need to know about this?

Even though people with MRKH may not have a cervix and as a result are unable to have cervical cancer, they can still get vaginal, vulva and anal cancers. Preventative measures and screening play an important role in keeping you healthy.

What are Cervical Screening Tests?

Cervical screening tests (CST) detect the human papilloma virus (HPV). Certain types of HPV, over time, can cause abnormal changes to cells of the lower genital tract (mainly the cervix, but also the vagina, vulva and anus), which over time can lead to cancer.

Unfortunately, the optimal timing of HPV screening in people with MRKH is not yet known. This can make it difficult for people with MRKH to know what screening tests they require throughout their lives.

What does the evidence say?

There is currently a lack of research about MRKH and vaginal, vulva or anal cancers. The following information is based on general principles and devised from other areas where some evidence exists (for example, for women who have surgically had the cervix removed):

- To prevent HPV, we recommend everyone have the Gardasil-9 vaccine (HPV vaccine)
- HPV is transmitted through close skin-to-skin contact during sex, so using condoms or dental dams can help to prevent HPV transmission
- For those who do not have MRKH, a 5 yearly cervical screening test is recommended from age 25 - 74 years. More frequent CST may be recommended if there has been an abnormal result or symptoms (e.g., new unexplained post coital bleeding), or in some special circumstances where the function of the immune system is affected by some specific illnesses or medications.

Testing Options

In people with MRKH or those with no cervix, routine cervical screening tests is not currently recommended. However, a vaginal vault test can be performed on a 5 yearly basis. In addition, it is recommended that a vaginal vault test be performed if symptoms develop (e.g., new, unexplained bleeding after sex).

What is a Vaginal Vault?

The vaginal vault is a term that refers to the area on the inside, at the end of the vagina. In people with a cervix, this is where the cervix sits. If you don't, have a cervix, this area is referred to as the 'vaginal vault'.

Self-Collection

Recently there has been an expansion of self-collected cervical screening tests. It is recommended that if people with MRKH are wanting a 5 yearly vaginal vault test, the self-collected sample may be preferred over clinician-collected, as it may be more convenient and comfortable.

Testing Results

If people with MRKH have a vaginal vault test and the result reveals the presence of HPV, a referral to a Paediatric and Adolescent Gynaecologist, or experienced Colposcopist (Gynaecologist with experience in HPV) may be recommended for further management, which may require vaginoscopy (this involves looking at the vagina under a microscope).



Sometimes this can be done in clinic rooms, but sometimes general anaesthetic may be required, depending on the individual. Note that no matter what your age is, for people with MRKH, paediatric and adolescent gynaecologists often have the most experience with people with MRKH.

Talking to your GP

Asking your GP about what screening tests you require can be difficult for those with MRKH. To help make this process easier, you can take a copy of this information sheet to show your GP.

Who developed this document?

This fact sheet was developed in partnership between MRKH Australia and the Australian & New Zealand Society of Paediatric and Adolescent Gynaecology. It was also reviewed by members of the MRKH community before publication.

General information:

- www.health.gov.au/campaigns/self-collection-for-the-cervical-screening-test
- www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/national-cervical-screening-program
- www.jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/health-checks/cervical-screening-test
- www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-services/human-papillomavirus-hpv-immunisation-service
- www.mrkhaustralia.org

Disclaimer

The information in this document is intended for information purposes only. Please seek advice from a medical professional if you have any concerns.