

Women's Health Exams

Description

It is generally recommended that women receive their first pelvic exam within a few years after beginning to be sexually active or at 21, whichever comes first. A pelvic exam will detect the presence of Human Papillomavirus (HPV), but is only suggested for women 21 and older. These exams are important because they can detect early signs of cervical cancer, one of the most common cancers in women. Over the last forty years, cervical cancer deaths have decreased significantly, due in large part, to the use of the exam for early detection.

What you should expect

A typical gynecologist visit will include a *breast exam*, a *pelvic exam*, and a *bimanual exam*. It should also include a discussion of pertinent health issues and provide answers to any questions you may have.

THE BREAST EXAM

A physical exam in which your health care provider will check for any visual abnormalities or lumps in your breasts.

PELVIC EXAM

Begins with an examination for rashes and/or redness in the external or internal areas of the vagina to detect any signs of sexually transmitted diseases. Next, a plastic device (speculum) is inserted into the vagina to separate the vaginal walls so the provider can examine the cervix. The following tasks may be performed during this exam:

Pap Smear

This is a simple and relatively painless exam which detects abnormal cells on your cervix. A small soft brush will be used to collect some cells from your cervix. Pap smears are recommended for women 21 years and older, every 3 years unless you receive an abnormal result.

Wet Mount

This involves using a cotton swab to collect a sample of discharge from the vaginal walls to check for a vaginal infection.

Chlamydia test

This involves taking a swab of the cervical mucous to be used for detecting the presence of Chlamydia-causing bacteria. This test is included in the exam at San Diego State University Student Health Services. However, it may not be a part of a pelvic exam elsewhere. If you are being seen off campus, ask your health care provider if they include this test in a pelvic exam.

BIMANUAL EXAM

Is a physical examination of the uterus, vagina, ovaries and fallopian tubes. This is performed with one or two fingers of one gloved hand placed inside the vagina and the other hand pressing on the outer abdomen. This exam assists your health care provider in identifying abnormalities in the pelvis.

Preparing for your pelvic exam

- A reliable Pap smear cannot be done while you are menstruating, you must reschedule your appointment if you have your period during your scheduled exam.
- Do not have intercourse, use vaginal medication creams, use tampons, or douche 72 hours before your appointment. It is difficult to get reliable samples following any of these activities. If any of these activities occur, call and reschedule your appointment.
- Please arrive on time for your appointment. If you are late, you may be asked to reschedule for a later date.

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- There will be paperwork to fill out. You will be provided this paperwork during the GYN Orientation (see below) or from the staff when you check into your appointment.
- Be prepared to spend at least one hour in the clinic to complete your exam. Bring the following items/information with you on the day of your exam:
 - Family PACT card (if applicable - see below)
 - Current SDSU student Red ID card
 - Dates of any abnormal Pap smears (and what kind of abnormality if known)
 - Date of your last menstrual period
 - The name of your pills or a pill packet if you are taking oral contraceptives, as well as the names of any other medications you may be taking
 - Your diaphragm or cervical cap, if you use any of these methods
 - Your questions regarding birth control and/or sexual health issues

The GYN Orientation

If you have never had a pelvic exam and/or if you wish to begin the use of a prescription birth control method for the first time, you **must** attend a GYN Orientation session before you make your appointment at SDSU Student Health Services.

This informal and informative session will review in detail what will happen during your exam and provides a forum for discussing the pros and cons of various contraceptive methods. You will learn the latest on sexually transmitted disease prevention and have an opportunity to have all your questions answered in a confidential setting. Check with the Health Promotion Department (619-594-4133) for exact times and locations. You can also find GYN orientation times on the Health Promotion tab of the Student Health Services website (shs.sdsu.edu).

Family Planning, Access, Care, and Treatment (Family PACT) program

You may be eligible to receive the above services at no cost if you qualify for Family PACT (a State program that provides free family planning services to low income men and women). For more information please refer to their website FamilyPACT.org. If you would like to determine if you are eligible for this program you should arrive one day prior to your appointment in order to apply for the Family PACT program.

Remember

This appointment is the time to ask your provider any questions regarding STDs, pregnancy, and birth control. Although it may be uncomfortable to discuss these issues, the staff at Student Health Services is comprised of various health professionals that are here to help you.

For More Information:

Student Health Services619-594-5281
Health Promotion.....619-594-4133
Visit Our Website at shs.sdsu.edu
Facebook/Twitter..... Facebook.com/aztechealth &
@AZTEChalth