

# What Prevents or Enables Pap Testing For 2S/LGBTQ+ People?

The Canadian Cancer Society recommends sexually active people with cervixes over 21 have a Pap test every 1-3 years.<sup>1,2</sup> This includes women of diverse sexual orientations (such as lesbian, bisexual and queer women) as well as trans men and gender non-conforming people with cervixes. Yet, 2S/LGBTQ+ people face lower screening rates and significant barriers to accessing Pap tests. Effective action from clinicians can reduce these barriers and reduce the instance of cervical cancer in this population.

## Key facts:

- The virus that causes cervical cancer (HPV), is as common in queer women as it is in straight women.<sup>3</sup> Queer women's chances of having Pap test results that require treatment are about the same as straight women's.<sup>4</sup>
- Trans men receiving androgen therapy may be more likely than cis women to have Pap results that require follow-up.<sup>5,6</sup>
- Among 2S/LGBTQ+ people in Canada, only about half (54.5%) of cisgender women had a Pap test in the last three years. About one quarter (26.3%) of trans men had a Pap test completed in the past 3 years.<sup>7</sup>

## What does research indicate about enabling Pap tests for 2S/LGBTQ+ people?



### Barriers and Enablers for Cisgender 2S/LGBQ+ Women



Barrier	Description
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Healthcare provider discourages Pap testing or does not inform patients of Pap test recommendations<sup>3,8</sup></li><li>- Healthcare provider does not inform patients HPV can be transmitted between two women<sup>8</sup></li></ul>
Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Patient has experienced discrimination accessing healthcare<sup>8,9</sup></li></ul>
Procedural Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Women experience or anticipate pain during Pap test<sup>9</sup></li></ul>
Structural Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Healthcare providers have used contraceptive appointments in the past to encourage Pap testing, systematically excluding some women who have sex with women<sup>4</sup></li><li>- In some jurisdictions, past guidelines discouraged women who have sex with women from having Pap tests, despite a lack of supporting evidence<sup>8</sup></li></ul>
Enabler	Description
Patient interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Healthcare provider recommends Pap testing<sup>9</sup></li><li>- Positive past experiences with healthcare provider<sup>8,9</sup></li></ul>
Environmental Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Clinic is queer-affirming and staff are respectful of women's queer identities<sup>9</sup></li><li>- Women feel comfortable disclosing their sexuality to healthcare provider<sup>3</sup></li></ul>



## Barriers and Enablers for Transgender Men and Gender Non-Conforming People



Barrier	Description
Communication	- Healthcare providers discourage Pap testing or assume gender-diverse people do not require Pap testing <sup>10,11</sup>
Discrimination	- Patient has experienced discrimination or mistreatment accessing healthcare <sup>10-12</sup>
Understanding and Acceptance of Gender Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Healthcare provider has limited understanding of health in gender-diverse people<sup>10</sup></li> <li>- Healthcare provider does not respect patient's gender identity<sup>12</sup></li> <li>- Pap testing information, campaigns, invitations and clinics are designed for a femme-identifying audience, creating gender dissonance<sup>10-12</sup></li> </ul>
Procedural Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pap testing procedure and genital bleeding trigger gender dysphoria<sup>11,12</sup></li> <li>- Inadequate samples are more common in people taking androgens, necessitating repeat testing<sup>6</sup></li> <li>- Pap test chaperones cause some people discomfort<sup>12</sup></li> <li>- Pain during Pap test<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>
Structural Discrimination	- Changing one's identity on medical records can cause them not to be invited for Pap testing, under the assumption they do not have a cervix <sup>10-12</sup>
Enabler	Description
Health Literacy	- Informing trans and gender non-conforming patients about recommendations for Pap testing <sup>12</sup>
Procedural Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Healthcare providers willing to modify Pap test to prevent pain<sup>12</sup></li> <li>- Healthcare providers answering questions and respecting choices to skip or complete the Pap test, and offering the option to stop at any time<sup>12</sup></li> <li>- Healthcare providers allowing trusted partners to be present for the Pap test<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>
Environmental Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clinic is queer-affirming and healthcare providers are respectful of queer identities<sup>12</sup></li> <li>- Pap test is offered in a trans-specific healthcare facility<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>
Structural Inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Medical records collecting both sex assigned at birth and gender identity<sup>12</sup></li> <li>- Gender-neutral checklists, allowing patients to voluntarily select which organs they have, and would like to screen for cancer.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>
Self-Collected Screening Options	- Option to self-collect a genital swab to be tested for HPV DNA without the assistance of a healthcare provider, instead of a Pap test <sup>13-16</sup>

## References

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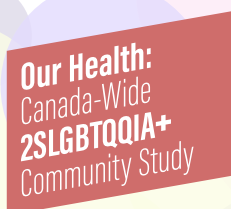
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