

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Medical Research



Monday, 24 July 2023

MORE VICTORIANS OPTING FOR SELF-COLLECT CERVICAL SCREENING

More Victorian women who have never been screened for cervical cancer are testing thanks to the roll out of a new and less invasive testing option backed by the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited the Royal Women's Hospital to mark one year since the self-collection option was introduced and remind all women, they need to be tested every five years.

Self-collection is a simple process which tests for human papillomavirus (HPV) – a common infection that can cause cervical cancer. It allows women to collect their own sample and avoid a pap smear which many women report finding uncomfortable.

Providing an alternative reduce these barriers and ensure women who otherwise would have gone without a test are more likely to screen for cervical cancer.

Since the self-collection option was introduced nationally on July 1 2022, Victoria has seen a rapid uptake in reported self-tests with the number rising from 180 in June 2022 to 2,413 in December 2022.

In further good news in 2022, 63 per cent of the self-collected tests in Victoria were from people who had either, never screened at all or screened less than the recommended amount of once every five years.

Among Victorians with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, there was a five-fold increase in the number of people choosing self-collected tests.

Self-collected tests now account for up to 12 per cent of all monthly cervical screening tests in Victoria, and we expect this to keep growing.

More than 70 per cent of cervical cancers occur in those who have never screened or are overdue and self-collection will play a key role in our efforts toward the elimination of cervical cancer.

Improved access to cervical screening is giving Victorian women and people with a cervix, supports a key target of the *Victoria Cancer Plan 2020-24* - to see cervical cancer eliminated as a public health concern by 2030.

Australia's world-leading screening program, combined with its HPV vaccination program, means we are on track to be the first country in the world to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health concern.

The Labor Government provides free cervical screening tests to at risk groups through its partnership with the *Australian Centre for the Prevention of Cervical Cancer*.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"Regular screening is your best protection against cervical cancer – so if you're due for a test or have never been tested – contact your GP and request a self-collected test."

"Self-testing is reducing barriers and making it easier and faster to screen for cervical cancer."

"The rapid uptake of self-collection cervical cancer tests in Victoria shows more women are willing to get tested if they are given more control of their options."

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