

Age matters when it comes to screening for cervical cancer

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Electron micrograph of a negatively stained human papilloma virus (HPV) which occurs in human warts. Credit: public domain

Getting checked for cervical cancer isn't one-size-fits-all. Draft guidelines released Tuesday show age makes a difference.

The Pap test, a mainstay for women's health for decades, still is

recommended for women in their 20s.

The proposed new guidelines would let women 30 and older choose between the Pap or a newer test that detects if they have the HPV virus that causes most [cervical cancer](#). If the HPV test finds no trouble, women could wait five years to be re-tested, compared to getting a Pap every three years.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force says HPV is too common, and transient, to test younger women for it. HPV becomes riskier with age. If the guidelines are finalized, older women could decide which test best fits their health needs.

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