

**Fact:** All women are at risk for cervical cancer. Even women who have never been sexually active with men or are not sexually active should have regular Pap tests.

**Changes in cervical cells are not associated with any symptoms. You may feel fine.**



## LESBIAN HEALTH PROJECT

Initiated in 1992, the Lesbian Health Project of the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center seeks to promote non-homophobic health services which will provide lesbians with the ability to make the best health decisions possible based on accurate knowledge. The focus of the project is on developing educational materials for lesbians and trainings for health and social service professionals. The project has recently conducted a survey to identify lesbian friendly health care providers in northern and eastern Maine who will accept referrals from the Lesbian Health Project. In addition, the project sponsors a Lesbian Health Clinic at the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center. For more information or to become involved in the work of the project contact The Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center at 947-5337.

### What is the lesbian health project?

## LOCAL RESOURCES

### Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center

Call **947-5337** for an appointment.

Provides low-cost, woman positive, lesbian-centered health care including:

- Pelvic Exams
- Breast Exams
- Health Education
- Instruction in Breast Self-Exam
- Lesbian Health Project
- Pap Smears
- Mammography Referrals
- Health Advocacy
- Screening and Treatment of STDs
- Lesbian Support Group

### The Maine Breast and Cervical Health Program

Call **1-800-350-5180** to see if you qualify and to find a provider near you.

TTY 287-8015

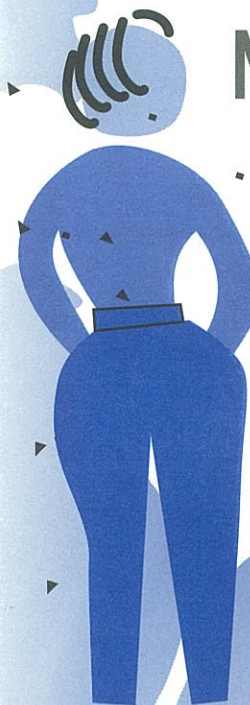
Provides mammograms, Pap tests, clinical breast exams and pelvic exams at no cost to Maine women, over 50, who meet financial guidelines and don't have enough insurance.

The program provides breast and cervical health education, including breast self-exam (BSE), for all Maine women.



# If I'm a Lesbian...

## Why Do I Need a Pap Test?



## LESBIAN HEALTH PROJECT

Made possible by a  
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**Myth:** Only women who have intercourse with men need to worry about getting cervical cancer.

## What puts lesbians at risk?

The cause of cervical cancer is unknown, but it is thought to be related to sexual activity. Most cases are believed to be related to the sexually transmitted Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Even if you have not had sex with men for years, you may have been exposed to HPV. A female partner can expose you to HPV. Shared sex toys can also transmit the virus.

Since we don't know for sure what causes cervical cancer, women who are not sexually active should also have regular Pap tests.

**When Detected Early  
Cervical Changes That Can  
Lead to Cervical Cancer are  
Almost 100% Curable**



## What is a Pap test?

It is a simple test used to find abnormal cells (cancer or pre-cancer) in the cervix. When these cells are detected early, they are very treatable.

### Pap Test Tips

- The best time to have a Pap test is in the middle of your menstrual cycle (not during your period). If you no longer have periods, you can have a Pap test any time.
- Two to three days before your Pap test - avoid putting anything into your vagina. **No penetration. This includes sex toys, tampons, vaginal creams, douches, medications, or lubricants.**
- Ask how you will find out the results of your test.

### What if I have an abnormal Pap Test?

- If you receive an abnormal result, this does not mean that you have cervical cancer, but some cell changes are a sign that cancer could develop.
- If cancer is found, treating it can keep it from spreading.
- What to do about an abnormal Pap test depends on your result. You may be asked to repeat the Pap test later, take medication for an infection that might be present, or have further tests. It is very important to follow your health care provider's recommendations.

## What may increase my risk of cervical cancer?

- Sexual activity before the age of 18.
- The greater the number of sexual partners you have had.
- The greater the number of sexual partners your partner has had.
- If you have ever had a sexually transmitted disease.
- Whether you smoke or have ever smoked.
- If you are HIV positive.
- Exposure to the drug DES when your mother was pregnant with you.

## What can I do to Protect Myself?

- Have regular check-ups
- Practice safer sex
- Don't smoke
- Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day!
- There is evidence that a diet rich in these substances can decrease our risk of certain types of cancer, including cervical cancer.

