

Self-Collection for Cervical Screening

Important update on self-collection during pregnancy

September 2022

Key message

Only the **Copan 552C dry flocced, red topped swab** should be used for self-collection during pregnancy. Talk to your local pathology laboratory to make sure you have the right swabs.

Background

Anyone eligible for a Cervical Screening Test under the National Cervical Screening Program (i.e., women and people with a cervix aged 25-74 years who have ever had any sexual contact) can choose to screen either through self-collection of a vaginal sample using a simple swab (unless a co-test is indicated), or clinician-collection of a sample from the cervix using a speculum.

The [NCSP Clinical Guidelines](#) recommend that all women due for cervical screening in pregnancy may be offered the option to self-collect a vaginal sample for HPV testing. A Cervical Screening Test using a self-collected vaginal sample is as accurate as a clinician-collected sample taken from the cervix during a speculum examination.

Offering self-collection during pregnancy

Self-collection can be offered to patients during pregnancy. However, when offering self-collection during pregnancy, only the **Copan 552C dry flocced swab, red topped** should be used.

- The type of self-collection swab used in your clinical practice will be dependent on the preference of the pathology laboratory and the technologies they have available.
- Be sure to check the laboratory's instructions for sample collection and handling as they can vary between the different products used by various laboratories.

The **Copan 552C dry flocced swab, red topped** is delivered dry to the laboratory for processing. There are only three laboratories currently accredited to process these swabs:

- [VCS Pathology](#) (VIC) – contact David Hawkes at dhawkes@vcs.org.au or 0400 722 202
- [Douglass Hanly Moir Pathology](#) (NSW) – contact Shirley George at sgeorge@dhm.com.au or (02) 9855 6203
- [Sullivan Nicolaidis Pathology](#) (QLD) – contact Doctors Services at doctorservices@snp.com.au or 1300 SNPATH (1300 767 284)

If your local pathology provider is unable to process these types of self-collected samples or is unable to refer samples to an accredited laboratory for processing, you can contact an accredited laboratory directly to arrange for processing of the sample.

Note, other self-collection swabs currently available **cannot** be used for self-collection during pregnancy. This includes the:

- **Copan 552C.80 dry flocced swab, red topped** (Roche validated method), and

- **Copan 5E089N dry flocced swab, white topped** (Becton Dickinson validated method).

These self-collection swabs are still safe and effective to use for cervical screening amongst the general cervical screening population.

Healthcare providers are encouraged to continue to talk to their usual pathology provider in the first instance to:

- confirm that they can process self-collected vaginal samples, or that they are able to send on self-collected vaginal samples to a laboratory that can process them, and
- order the correct collection device(s) and other consumables for offering self-collection, including the **Copan 552C dry flocced swab, red topped** for patients choosing to self-collect during pregnancy, and
- confirm any collection, handling, and transport requirements.

Want to know more?

Find more information and resources about the National Cervical Screening Program and self-collection at health.gov.au/NCSP.