A Message to Aboriginal Women
The Role of Aboriginal Women in the Family

Well women are strong women
Aboriginal Women & Cervical Cancer

- *Cervical Cancer* is a preventable disease.
- Pap tests detect pre-cancerous changes and treatment can PREVENT cancer.
- 85% of women who die from cervical cancer have Never had a Pap test, or have not had regular Pap tests.
- Data from W.A, S.A and N.T suggests cancer of cervix occurs 4-5 times more commonly among ATSI women.
- Evidence from Victoria and South Australia suggest that Aboriginal women are less aware than non-Aboriginal women about Pap tests.
- Cervical cancer may occur if abnormal changes to the cells of the cervix are left untreated.
Where is the Cervix?

The cervix is inside a woman’s body at the bottom of the uterus.

The Uterus is:

• Also called the womb
• Located inside a woman’s body
• Between the bladder and the bowel
• About the size of a clenched fist (when not pregnant)
• Part of a woman’s reproductive system
• The place where a baby grows when the woman is pregnant
The Cervix

• Located at the top of the vagina
• The muscular end of the uterus
• Stretches open to allow a baby to pass through, when a baby is being born
• Allows blood from a woman’s period to pass from the uterus through the cervix and out of the body through the vagina
• Allows sperm to travel through the vagina into the uterus
• Is the part that cells are sampled from when a Pap test is taken
The Vagina

- Is a tube-like canal about 10-15 cm in length
- Is part of the birth canal
- Is where tampons are inserted
- Is where the penis is inserted during sexual intercourse
What is a Pap test?

- A Pap test examines cells taken from the cervix, and picks up early warning signs that can be treated to prevent cervical cancer.

How is a Pap test done?

- Safe test, takes only a few minutes
- Need to lie on your back or side
- Dr or nurse inserts speculum into vagina to see cervix
- Brush/spatula used to sample cells
- Cells put on slide and sent to lab
- Pap test should not hurt
When should women have a Pap test?

• Women between the ages of 18-70 yrs who have ever had sex need a Pap test every two years

Where can Pap test be done?

A Pap Test can be done at:
• Local Doctor
• Women’s Health Clinic
• Aboriginal Medical Service

Contact your local Aboriginal Health Worker for more information
Barriers to Cervical Screening For Aboriginal Women

• Considered “Women’s Business”
• Lack of female doctors
• Shyness/shame/embarrassment
• Lack of knowledge of Pap test
• Fear about the results
• Don’t know when Pap test is due
• Being too busy
• Distance/travel/transport/childcare
• Financial costs
• Issue of STI’s
• Think they don’t need test - too old
• Concerns re confidentiality
What if?

• I’ve gone through change of life? (Menopause)
• I don’t have sex anymore?
• I’ve had a hysterectomy?
• I’ve had my tubes tied?
• What about sexually transmissible infections? (STI’s)
Getting your Pap test results

• It is very important to get your results
• What do I do if the result is abnormal?
• What does an abnormal result mean?
• What happens after an abnormal Pap test?
• The importance of follow-up
What is a Colposcopy?

- A Colposcopy is an examination - shows where the damaged cells are on the cervix and what they look like.

What is a Biopsy?

- A biopsy is a very small piece of tissue usually only a few millimetres in diameter.
Some Treatment Options For The Removal of Abnormal Cervical Cells

1. Loop Excision
   This method uses an electric loop to remove the abnormal cells. This method is sometimes called a wire loop excision, LEEP or LLETZ.

2. Laser Treatment
   This method uses the heat from a laser beam to destroy the abnormal cells.

3. Diathermy
   This method uses heat carried in a wire to remove the abnormal cells.

4. Cryosurgery
   This method uses freezing to destroy the abnormal cells.

5. Cone Biopsy
   This treatment removes a small cone shaped piece of tissue from the cervix. It is also used to provide a larger sample for assessment.
• Where do I go for treatment?
• I.P.T.A.A.S
• Will I have to stay overnight?
• Why do I have to see the Dr. again?
• The NSW Pap Test Register
WELL WOMEN ARE STRONG WOMEN