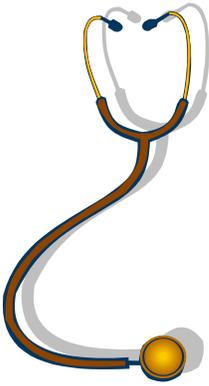


Understanding Your Pap Test Results



Most laboratories in the United States use a standard set of terms called the Bethesda System to report pap test results.

Normal: Pap samples that have no cell abnormalities are reported as "negative for intraepithelial lesion or malignancy"

Abnormal: Pap samples with cell abnormalities are divided into the following categories:

1. **ASC - Atypical Squamous Cells:**

Squamous cells are the thin flat cells that form on the surface of the cervix.

- **ASC-US-** atypical squamous cells of undetermined significance. The squamous cells do not appear completely normal, but doctors are uncertain about what the cell changes mean. Sometimes the changes are related to human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection. ASC-US are considered mild abnormalities.
- **ASC-H-** atypical squamous cells cannot exclude a high-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion. The cells do not appear normal, but doctors are uncertain about what the cell change means. ASC-H may be at higher risk of being precancerous.

2. **AGC - Atypical Glandular Cells:**

Glandular cells are mucus-producing cells found in the endocervical canal (opening in the center of the cervix) or in the lining of the uterus. The glandular cells do not appear normal, but the doctors are uncertain about what the cell changes mean.

3. **AIS - Endocervical adenocarcinoma *in situ*:**

Precancerous cells are found in the glandular tissue.

4. LSIL - Low-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion:

Low-grade means there are early changes in the size and shape of cells. The word "lesion" refers to an area of abnormal tissue.

Intraepithelial refers to the layer of cells that form the surface of the cervix. LSIL's are considered mild abnormalities often caused by human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection.

5. HSIL - High-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion:

High-grade means that there are more marked changes in the size and shape of the abnormal (precancerous cells), meaning that the cells look very different from normal cells. HSIL's are more severe abnormalities and have a higher likelihood of progressing to invasive cancer.

Terms Used To Describe Abnormal Results

Atypical Squamous Cells: Findings that are unclear, and not a definite abnormality.

Dysplasia: This term describes abnormal cells. Dysplasia is not cancer, although it may develop into very early cancer of the cervix. The cells look abnormal under the microscope, but do not invade nearby healthy tissue.

Degrees of dysplasia:

- Mild
- Moderate
- Severe
- *Carcinoma in situ*

Carcinoma in situ: Abnormal cells are present only in the layer of cells on the surface of the cervix- these cells may become cancerous and spread into nearby healthy cells.

SIL - Squamous intraepithelial lesion: Term used to describe abnormal changes in the cells on the surface of the cervix. The word "squamous" describes thin flat cells on the surface of the cervix. The word "lesion" refers to abnormal tissue.

SIL may be described as follows:

- Low grade- early changes in size and shape of cells
- High grade- precancerous cells that look very different from normal cells

CIN - Cervical Intraepithelial neoplasia: Used to describe abnormal growth of cells.

- Intraepithelial: layer of cells that form the surface of the cervix
- Neoplasia: abnormal growth of cells

The term CIN along with a number from 1-3 will describe a growth of abnormal cells on the cervix and how many layers of thickness of the lining of the cervix contains abnormal cells

Cervical Cancer: Occurs when abnormal cells spread deeper into the cervix or other tissues or organs.

Treatment

If the Pap test shows a minor abnormality, the physician may repeat the test in 3 months or longer to determine whether additional follow-up is needed.

Many times, minor cell changes go away without treatment. If follow up testing finds abnormal cells that have a high chance of becoming cancerous, further treatment is needed. Without treatment, these cells may turn into invasive cancer.

Treatment Options:

- LEEP: (loop electrosurgical excision procedure) electrical current which is passed through a thin wire loop which acts as a knife to excise or remove abnormal tissue.
- Cryotherapy: Destroys abnormal tissue by freezing it
- Laser Therapy: uses a narrow beam of intense light to destroy or remove abnormal cells
- Conization: removes a cone-shaped piece of tissue using a knife, laser, or the LEEP technique

For more information:

www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/detection/pap-test