

## ABNORMAL PAP SMEARS

The Pap smear your health care provider obtains from your cervix (the lower part of your womb) may show some abnormal changes. The Pap smear allows your health care provider to look at the skin cells from your cervix and detect problems. Your Pap smear may show one or more of the following changes prior to any cancerous changes and is important to follow up carefully with these. Ask your health care provider which of these changes you have.

### ASCUS (pronounced “ask-us”)

ASCUS stands for **atypical squamous cells of undetermined significance**. These changes in the squamous cells of your cervix mean that the cells on your Pap smear were slightly abnormal. ASCUS may be caused by a vaginal infection or an infection with a virus called *HPV* (human papillomavirus, or wart virus). Your health care provider will talk with you about the options of looking at your cervix with a microscope (colposcopy), or repeating your Pap smear every 3-6 months for two years.

### AGUS

AGUS stands for **atypical glandular cells of undetermined significance**. These changes in the glandular cells of your cervix mean that these cells were slightly abnormal on your Pap smear. AGUS can occur with infections or with an abnormality of the skin cells on the surface of your cervix or in the canal of your cervix. Your health care provider will tell you how the abnormal results on your Pap smear need to be evaluated. Your health care provider may recommend repeat Pap smears or colposcopy.

### LSIL

LSIL stands for **low-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion**. This is a common condition of the cells of the cervix and often occurs when HPV wart virus is present. These changes in the cervix can be present even if you and your sexual partner are monogamous and have never had visible warts. Changes due to LSIL often get

better with time. Your health care provider will talk with you about whether you need to have Pap smears every 3-6 months for two years or whether you should have colposcopy.

### Inflammation

If inflammation is present in the cells on the Pap smear, it means that some white blood cells were seen on your Pap smear. Inflammation of the cervix is very common and usually does not mean there is a problem. If the Pap smear showed that the inflammation is severe, your health care provider may want to find the cause, such as an infection. You may also need to have another Pap smear in 3-6 months to see if the inflammation has gone.

### Hyperkeratosis

*Hyperkeratosis* is a finding of dried skin cells on your Pap smear. It is often a change in the cells of the cervix that occurs from using a cervical cap or diaphragm or from having a cervical infection. Hyperkeratosis rarely needs any more evaluation than a repeat Pap smear in 3-6 months. If the hyperkeratosis is still present on the repeat Pap smear, your health care provider may want to repeat your Pap smear in another 3-6 months or perform colposcopy.

Please be sure that you let your health care provider's office know if you move or change your phone number so that you can be contacted with the results of your Pap smears or to arrange any other follow-up tests you may need.

Adapted from *American Family Physician Patient Information*.  
[Http://www.aafp.org/healthinfo](http://www.aafp.org/healthinfo). Feb. 12, 1997.

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