



Addressing challenges in the new cervical screening program

May 2018

It has now been more than five months since Australia commenced the new cervical screening program using HPV primary screening. As expected, with such a significant change, the transition has not been without its challenges. In response to feedback from our referring clinicians, this update addresses ongoing issues including:

Ordering tests

Assigning risk to symptomatic patients

Enhanced patient summaries

Ordering tests

1 Under 25-year-olds

There remains some confusion regarding the eligibility of patients under 25 years old to access Medicare-funded routine screening tests in the new program.

To clarify, **the minimum age for rebated routine cervical screening is 24 years and 9 months**. This applies not only to new women joining the program but also to those who have previously participated in screening and, although it may be two years since their previous Pap test, are still under the age of 25.

Exceptions are:

- Younger women who are experiencing symptoms, such as unexplained bleeding, who can access testing at any time.
- Women who experienced sexual debut prior to age 14 *and* prior to vaccination, who are allowed only one claimable screening test between the ages of 20 and 24.
- Women who have had abnormal screening results previously and have not completed the follow-up required to allow them to return to routine screening.

2 Self-collected HPV tests

The availability of self-collection in the screening program has been delayed due to the need to validate the collection swab on various HPV analysers in each individual testing laboratory. This has meant that in most states the test cannot yet be offered at local pathology laboratories.

Active consultation with Government and certification authorities continues to ensure this important feature will be available in all states as soon as practicable.



