

Notes

Date of my last period

Number of days I bled

Length of my cycle

*Questions I want to ask
the doctor ...*

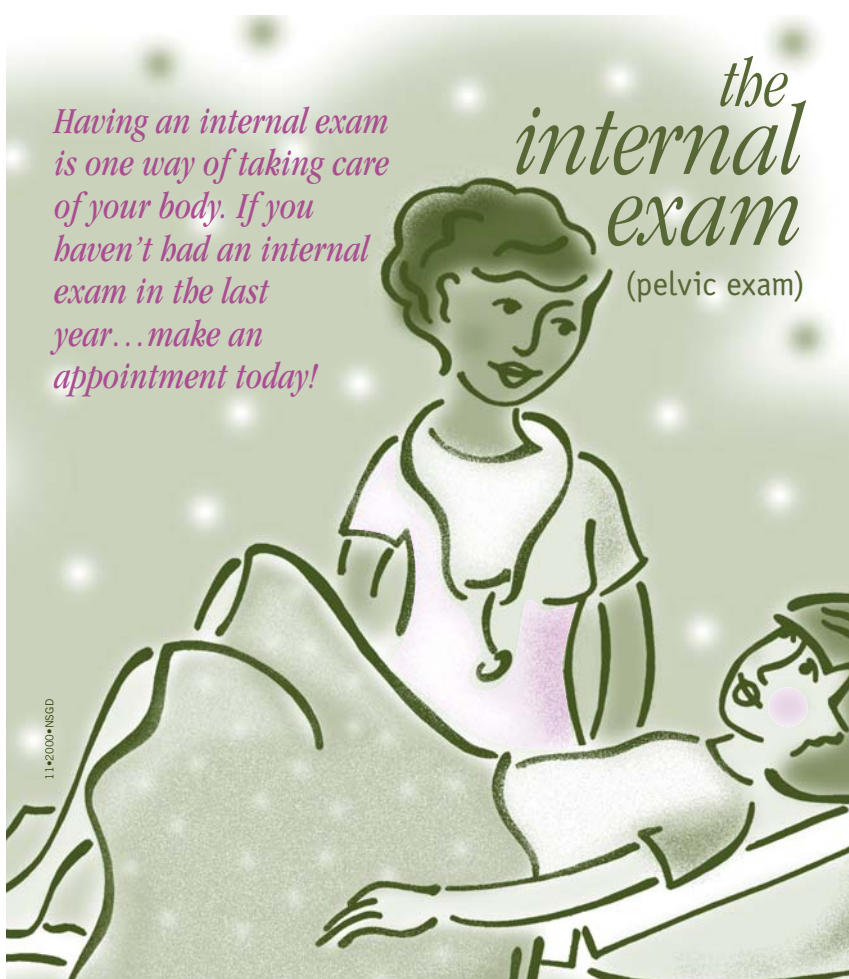
**AIDS and
Sexual Health Infoline**
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 **TORONTO** Public Health

*Having an internal exam
is one way of taking care
of your body. If you
haven't had an internal
exam in the last
year... make an
appointment today!*

*the
internal
exam*

(pelvic exam)



What is an internal exam?

An internal exam is a way for a doctor to check your genitals and the reproductive organs inside your body (ovaries, Fallopian tubes and uterus). It is also called a pelvic exam.

A family doctor, a nurse practitioner or a gynecologist can do an internal exam.

Who should have an internal exam?

Every woman over 18 and every woman under 18 who is having sex (sexual intercourse) should have an internal exam once a year.

Why should you have an internal exam?

Cancer of the cervix is preventable. The cervix is the opening to the uterus (womb). An internal exam is the only way a doctor can test the cervix. The doctor is testing your cervix for cells that are not normal. The earlier abnormal cells are found the better. Abnormal cells can be treated before they turn into cancer.

The doctor is also checking your ovaries, Fallopian tubes and uterus to see that everything is all right.

Tests are done for Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). Most STDs are easy to treat if they are found early.

When should you have an internal exam?

You should have an internal exam once a year. You may need one more often if you have any of these problems:

- Bleeding between periods (menstruation) or very heavy periods
- Bleeding after menopause
- Itching or burning around your genitals
- Discharge from the vagina that smells or looks different
- Pain or bleeding during intercourse
- Anything that is unusual, like pimples, warts, blisters on your genitals

How is an internal exam done?

1. The doctor will ask you for information about your health and your family's health. The doctor will also ask about your periods and your pregnancies.
2. The doctor puts on surgical gloves. Using a speculum, he or she opens your vagina to see your cervix.

The doctor takes some cells from the cervix for a test called a Pap smear and sends them to a laboratory for testing.

3. Then the doctor takes out the speculum and inserts two gloved fingers into the vagina. With the other hand on your abdomen, he or she can feel the ovaries, Fallopian tubes and uterus.



You may feel embarrassed or shy during the exam. You may ask to have your partner, a friend or a nurse in the room with you.

What do you need to know before your exam?

Do not have intercourse 24 hours before your exam.

Do not douche or use spermicide for 48 hours before your exam.

Make notes on the back of this pamphlet or try to remember the following details:

- Date of your last period
- Number of days you bled
- Length of your menstrual cycle (from the first day of one period to the first day of the next period)
- Any discharge from the vagina that smells or looks different
- Any new pain or anything that you don't understand, like pimples or itching