

Media release

For immediate issue

SHV leads the way with a new telehealth service for cervical screenings.

Sexual Health Victoria (SHV) is offering a new telehealth cervical screening test service; a groundbreaking advancement that makes these crucial screenings more readily accessible, comfortable, private and convenient.

SHV and VCS Pathology have joined forces to simplify cervical screening. Working collaboratively patients can attend a consultation remotely using a telehealth service and if eligible for self-collect, VCS Pathology will dispatch the screening kit via post, complete with a pre-paid return envelope, to be returned within 28 days. This innovative approach aims to increase participation in cervical cancer screening and reduce barriers for individuals, particularly those in under screened and rural communities.

SHV's Chief Executive Officer, Caroline Mulcahy said, "Our mission with this service is to dismantle barriers, ensuring equitable access to cervical screening for all Victorians. By doing so, we aim to significantly diminish the prevalence of cervical cancer."

Cervical screening as a self-collected test has been available in Australia for eligible patients since July 1, 2022. Patients use a small swab to collect a sample from within the vagina. This process is quick, easy, and private, offering the same accuracy as traditional tests administered by healthcare providers using a speculum in a clinic. SHV's new telehealth service enables a more comfortable and accessible cervical screening experience at-home.

Cervical cancer is a significant global health concern, and regular screenings are essential for early detection. However, geographical distance, privacy concerns and the discomfort associated with speculum examinations are common barriers to regular

screenings. Women and people with a cervix who have experienced sexual violence and trauma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee communities, and people living with a disability are more likely to be under screened and therefore at a higher risk of an undiagnosed HPV infection¹.

Research conducted in Australia has highlighted the effectiveness and acceptance of self-collected cervical screenings, especially in communities with historically low screening rates. The study, undertaken in collaboration with under screened populations, demonstrated a significant increase in participation when individuals were given the option to self-collect samples².

SHV encourages all individuals to prioritise their health and participate in regular cervical screenings. By making cervical screenings available via telehealth, we are reducing key barriers to screening and aim to help reduce the incidences of cervical cancer in Victoria.

References

1. Hammond, I. and Saville, M. (2022) *Cervical cancer screening guidelines, Cervical Cancer Screening Guidelines | Cancer Council*. Available at: <https://www.cancer.org.au/clinical-guidelines/cervical-cancer/cervical-cancer-screening> (Accessed: 01 May 2024).
2. Saville, M. *et al.* (2018) 'Self-collection for under-screened women in a national cervical screening program: Pilot study', *Current Oncology*, 25(1), pp. 27–32. doi:10.3747/co.25.3915.

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About Sexual Health Victoria:

Sexual Health Victoria (SHV) has been a leading provider of reproductive and sexual health care, education, and advocacy for over 50 years. SHV is an independent, not-for-profit, all-choice organisation dedicated to improving reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing for everyone in Victoria and beyond.

For more information about Sexual Health Victoria, visit shvic.org.au.