

## WHAT TO EXPECT: Assigned Female Annual Health Exam

What occurs during your annual exam will vary depending on your age, medical history, social history, and personal wishes.

Your exam may include:

- An examine of your breasts to see that they look and feel normal
- An examine and evaluation of your reproductive organs
- Screening of your cervix for abnormal changes that might lead to cancer (pap smear)
- Testing for infections, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- If applicable, evaluation of your current method of birth control and discussion options
- Discussion of any other sexual or reproductive concerns you might have

### Preparing for Your Appointment

- Schedule your exam when you do not have your period.
- No special preparation is necessary.
- A urine sample may be needed, so drink some water before your exam.

### What Happens During an Annual Exam?

You will be asked to undress and be given a gown. The provider should explain what she is doing during each step of the exam.

**Breast Exam:** Your healthcare provider will examine your breasts to check to see that they look and feel normal. They may also examine the front of your neck to check for thyroid gland abnormalities.

**Pelvic Exam:** You'll lie on your back on an exam table with your knees bent and your feet placed on the corners of the table or in supports (stirrups). You'll be asked to slide your body toward the end of the table and let your knees fall open. The pelvic exam usually lasts only a few minutes and can include the following:

- **External Genital Exam:** Your provider will look at your vulva, checking for irritation, redness, sores, swelling or other abnormalities.
- **Internal Visual Exam:** Your provider may use lubricant to insert a speculum, an instrument shaped like a slender duck bill, into your vagina much like a tampon is inserted. When the speculum is opened inside your vagina, your provider can examine your vagina and cervix (the entrance to your uterus) for abnormalities, including signs of infection, and collect any specimens needed for testing. You may feel mild discomfort or pressure during this part of the exam.
- **Pap smear:** For patients over the age of 21, the annual exam may include a Pap smear. If you are getting a Pap smear, your healthcare provider will swipe a small wand to collect a sample of your cervical cells before removing the speculum. These cells are sent for laboratory analysis. The Pap smear checks for abnormal changes in the cervix that could lead to cancer.
- **Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and other vaginal infection testing:** If you are having unusual vaginal odor or discharge the provider may take a swab of your vaginal secretions to send to the lab for analysis. If you request STI testing either a swab or urine will be collected to test for gonorrhea and chlamydia. A blood sample will be obtained to test for syphilis and HIV.

- **Physical exam.** Because your pelvic organs, including your uterus and ovaries, can't be seen from outside your body, your doctor needs to feel (palpate) your abdomen and pelvis for this part of the exam. Your doctor will insert two lubricated, gloved fingers into your vagina with one hand, while the other hand presses gently on the outside of your lower abdomen. During this part of the exam, your doctor will check the size and shape of your uterus and ovaries, noting any tender areas or unusual growths.

### **After the Exam**

After the exam, the provider will discuss her findings, the labs she will be ordering, and may provide education materials.

### **Getting the Lab Results**

If labs were performed, results are sent to you through the patient portal. How long it takes for results to come in is dependent on which tests you have had done. Results may take as long as 5 business days. If you have positive test results you will need a follow up visit for treatment.

### **Follow Up Visit for Treatment**

Appointment length: 20 minutes

#### **During your appointment**

- Your vitals (height, weight, temperature, and blood pressure) will be gathered by a nurse
- The nurse will confirm the reason for your appointment
- The medical provider will discuss your results with you and your treatment options
- The SHC can provide treatment of gonorrhea and chlamydia. Treatment of HIV and syphilis will require the involvement of off-campus agencies
- You may be advised to return for retesting after you have completed treatment