A Self-Advocate’s Guide To Pelvic Exams

What is a pelvic exam?
A pelvic exam checks the vagina, uterus, ovaries, and cervix for signs of sickness and health.

Who should get a pelvic exam?
People between the ages of 18 - 65.

Where do I go for a pelvic exam?
The exam should only take place in a health clinic or doctor’s office.

Why should I get a pelvic exam?
Your body is important!
• Even if you are not having sex with another person, your pelvis area needs to be checked to stay healthy.
• People with disabilities have a higher risk of cancer because they do not get regular check ups.

When should you get a pelvic exam?
Your healthcare provider will tell you if you need to have a pelvic exam. Some people have a pelvic exam once every 3 years. Others need an exam every year. You healthcare provider may also recommend a pelvic exam for the following reasons:

• Family history of cancer.
• Pelvic pain.
• Unusual vaginal discharge or bleeding.
• Concerns about sexually transmitted diseases or infections (STIs).
• You are pregnant.

What should I expect during a pelvic exam?
A doctor, nurse or physician’s assistant will check your vagina. They will use a medical tool called a speculum to make it easier to see inside your vagina.

• You may feel pressure or discomfort.
• You may bring support person with you during the exam.
• You may ask to take some medicine that will help you relax during the exam. You can also ask to be put to sleep.
• This exam should not take longer than 10 minutes.
• It is okay to ask questions to understand the process.
• It is okay to use your voice if you’re uncomfortable.

For more information:
Contact your primary care provider or nearest Planned Parenthood with questions. Contact You First at 800-508-2222 to learn more about eligibility for free screening.

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