

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE:

CANCER SCREENING – CERVICAL SELF-COLLECTION

Empowering people with a cervix to support cervical cancer screening particularly in under-screened communities.

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Self-collection for cervical test screening is often preferred by women, as it is quick, private, more comfortable, and just as accurate as a clinician-collected screen. Goulburn Valley Public Health Unit has been promoting cervical testing across diverse communities in the region.

The six-month GV PHU Cancer Screening Project identified a need within our region: to promote cervical cancer screening and the option of self-collection. This innovative approach not only empowers women but also plays a vital role in early detection and ultimately the of saving lives.

To achieve this, we have launched a comprehensive community engagement and promotional campaign. This has included partnerships with existing Sexual Health Initiatives, leveraging expertise to reach a broader audience. Over the past six months, the project has achieved the following impacts and outcomes :

1. **Community Events:** We've actively participated in 10 community events, ensuring that our message reaches culturally and linguistically diverse as well as low socio-economic status communities.
2. **Consumer Engagement:** Approximately 160 consumers have been engaged, sharing crucial information and dispelling myths about cervical cancer screening.
3. **Partnerships:** We have fostered 37 instances of external agency interaction and partnership, a testament to the collective commitment toward our cause.
4. **Resource Utilisation:** We've utilised endorsed resources from Cancer Council Victoria, ensuring that the information we provide to the community is both accurate and reliable.

Self-collection may be the key to increasing participation in cervical screening, particularly within communities that have historically been under screened . However, it is essential to acknowledge that many people are still unaware of self-collection as an option for cervical screening. To bridge this knowledge gap, information has been provided to community groups regarding the process for self-collection, including clarifying that the test is done privately at the doctor's or other health setting, it is usually behind a screen or in the bathroom, and it needs to be done under the guidance of a doctor or nurse.

Research consistently underscores the impact of healthcare professionals in motivating patients to participate in cancer screening. Therefore, it is imperative for us to actively advocate and encourage all eligible Victorians to participate in cancer screening.

Here's how you as health professionals can help make a significant difference:

- Tell patients about the benefits of cervical screening and their options for having a Cervical Screening Test
- Explain how the new test looks for [human papillomavirus \(HPV\)](#)
- Explain the difference between self-collected and clinician-collected samples
- Advise how and when the results are provided
- Remind them that after their first Cervical Screening Test, screening is every 5 years, if no HPV is found.
- Reassure them that it's a straightforward process that is private and confidential.

In the collective effort to prioritise cancer screening and early detection in your community, your role as a healthcare professional is paramount. Your commitment to educating your patients and promoting awareness of this self-collection option, will undoubtedly contribute to our fight against cancer.

Education:

[National cervical screening program online modules](#)

[Murray PHN Webinar Recording: How to optimise the use of HP self-collection](#)

More Information:

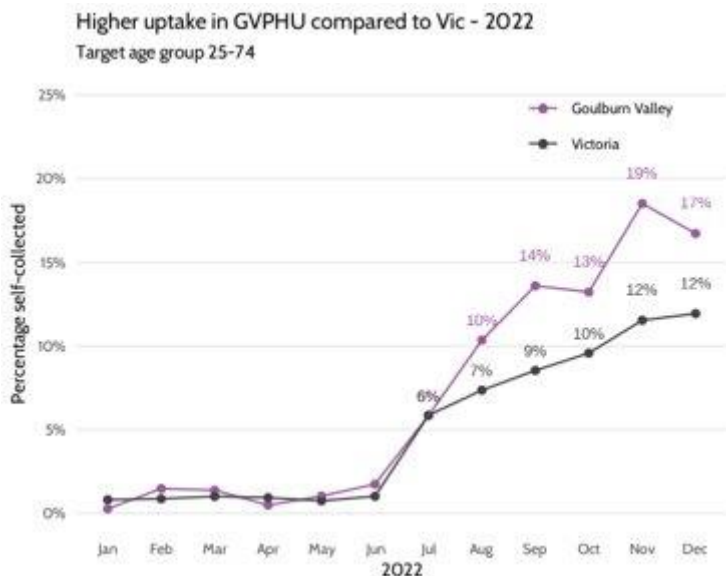
[The importance of Health Professionals](#)

[Tools and Resources](#)

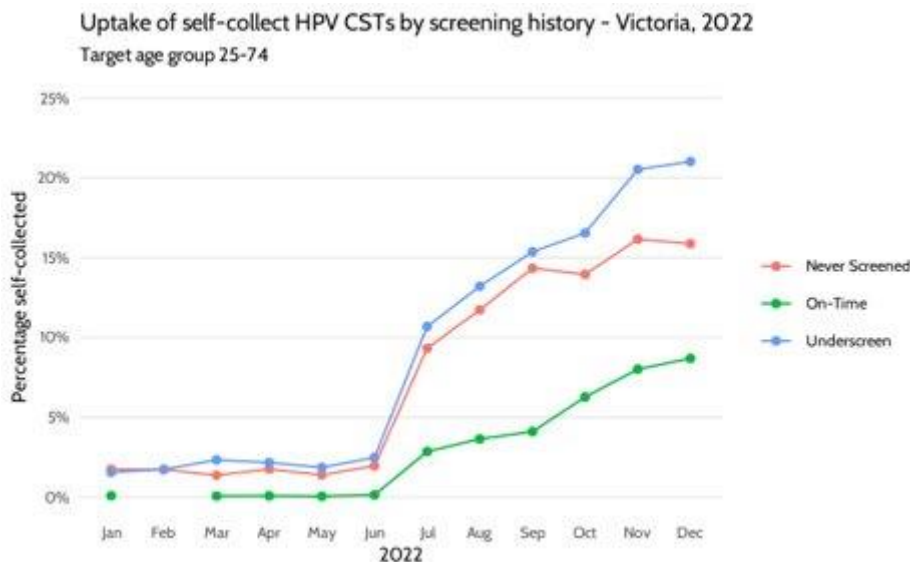
[Cervical screening pathway quick reference guide](#)

GV PHU has obtained data from the Australian Centre for the Prevention of Cervical Cancer (ACPCC) for our region, as shown below:

Refined Cervical Screening Test by Self collection (Jan – Dec 2022)



The data demonstrates a significant increase in self-collection in the region from July 2022. This may be due to a major promotion campaign on self-collection run by the GV PHU in July 2022. We hope this can be replicated after GV PHU’s promotional campaign work from March to September 2022.



This data shows that a larger proportion of people in Victoria who had never screened or were under-screened opted for self-collection. This suggests that the self-collect option may improve screening coverage in these priority groups.

For more details about the GV Public Health Unit Cancer Screening Project, please contact Dale-Maree Hopper via email: <mailto:Dale-Maree.Hopper@gvhealth.org.au>. Together, we can make a significant impact in the battle against cervical cancer.