

Facts About Cervical Cancer

What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer starts when cells within the cervix grow out of control.

Did You Know?

- ▶ Embarrassment is one of the major causes of not getting tested for cervical cancer.
- ▶ Even though women may feel something is wrong, they may not seek help due to fear.
- ▶ Men have a very important role to play in cervical health. Their support is critical. Many women need encouragement to get their routine screenings
- ▶ Most cases of cervical cancer are caused by infection with HPV, a sexually transmitted virus that enters cervical cells and can cause them to change.
- ▶ There are 12,000 new cervical cancers diagnosed in the U.S. per year.
- ▶ There are over 3,500 preventable deaths from cervical cancer each year.
- ▶ In the United States, Hispanic women are most likely to get cervical cancer, followed by African-Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Caucasians. American Indians and Alaskan natives have the lowest risk of cervical cancer in this country.

In most cases, problems can be prevented through early detection and treatment before cancer develops!



Key Terms Related to Your Cervical Health

If you aren't sure what a word means, please ask!

Key Terms

- ▶ **Cervix:** The cervix is the part of the female reproductive system that connects the uterus (womb) to the vagina. It is made up of strong muscles and it functions like a tunnel, allowing the flow of menstrual blood (your monthly period) from the uterus into the vagina and directs sperm into the uterus during intercourse.
- ▶ **Endometrium:** The endometrium is the tissue lining the inner cavity of the uterus (or womb). In women of childbearing age, this inner layer of the uterus goes through a series of monthly changes known as the menstrual cycle.
- ▶ **Fallopian Tubes:** The pair of tubes along which eggs travel from the ovaries to the uterus.
- ▶ **Myometrium:** The smooth muscle tissue of the uterus.
- ▶ **Ovaries:** Where ova or eggs are produced.
- ▶ **Uterus:** A hollow, pear-shaped organ that is located in a woman's lower abdomen, between the bladder and the rectum. It is the organ where a fetus grows until birth.
- ▶ **Vagina:** the muscular and tubular part of the female genital tract, which in humans extends from the vulva to the cervix.
- ▶ **Vulva:** The external female genital area.

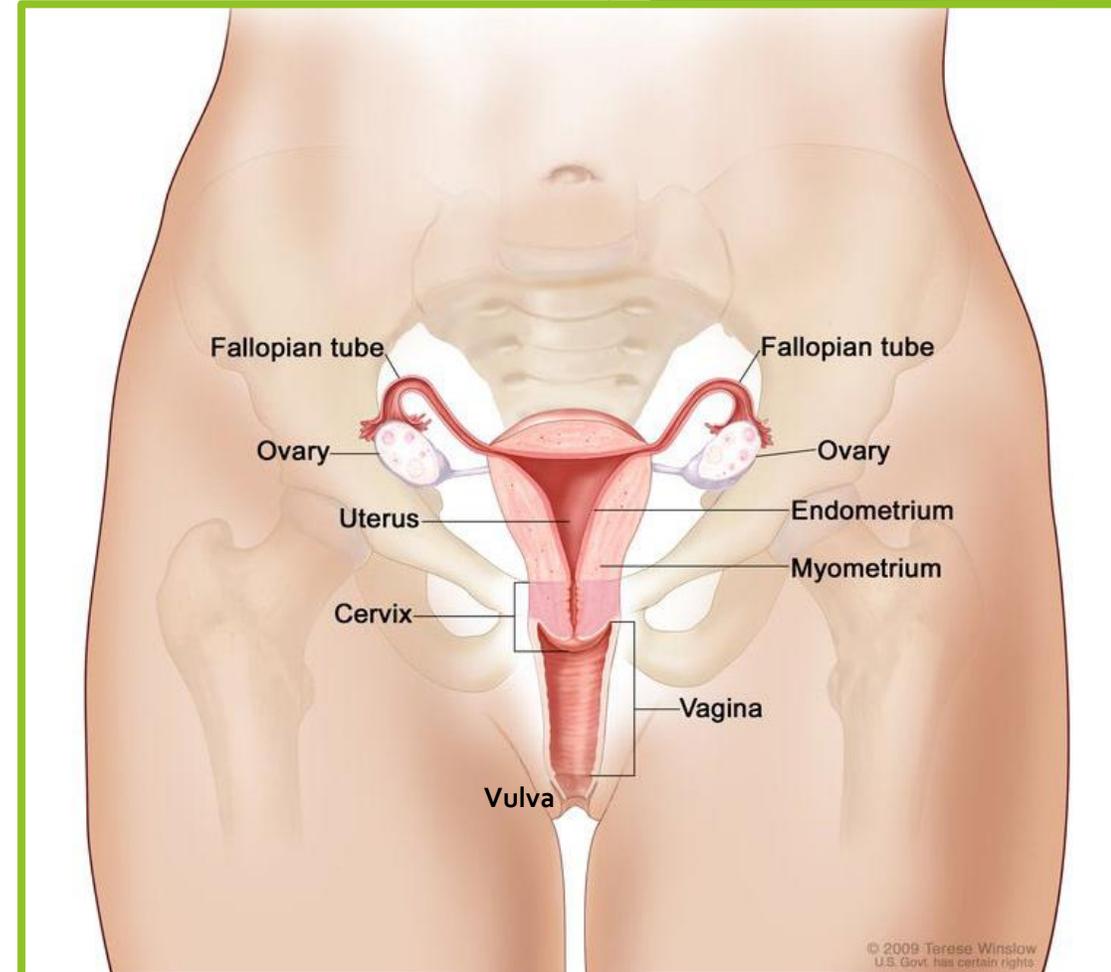


Image source: <https://www.cancer.gov/types/cervical/understanding-cervical-changes>

Pelvic Exams and Pap Tests Save Lives!

The pelvic exam has three parts:

1. Looking at the vulva.
2. Looking at the vagina and cervix with a speculum.
3. Checking the internal organs.

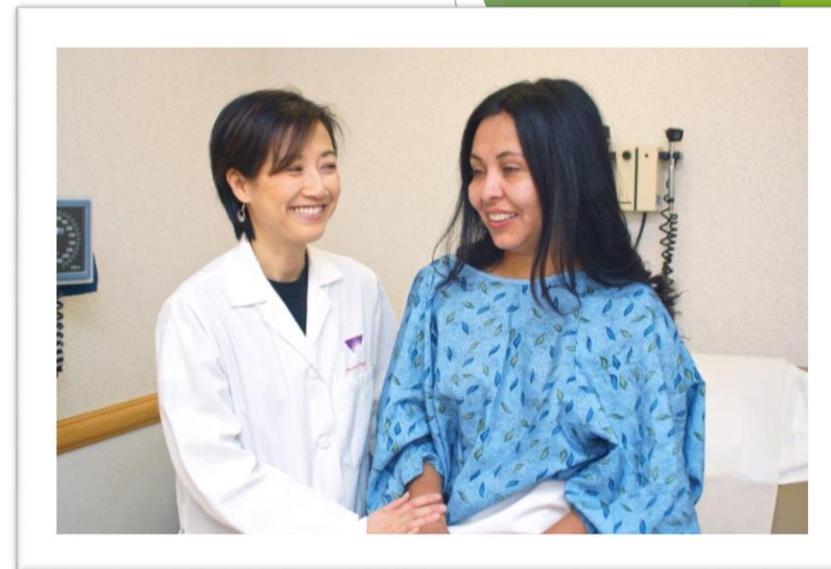
A Pap test checks for abnormal changes in the cervix that could lead to cancer.

During a Pap test, a sample of cells is taken from your cervix with a small brush and examined under a microscope.

An abnormal test result does not mean you have cancer. Women with abnormal Pap test results are usually examined further.

Your health care team is here to make you comfortable!

Please tell your Doctor if something frightens or bothers you or if you are not sure what something means.



Cervical Care Glossary

Colposcopy: This gives your Doctor a better look at your cervix using an instrument called a colposcope to shine a light on your cervix and magnify it. If an abnormal area is seen, a biopsy will be done.

Hysterectomy: Removal of the uterus.

Loop electrosurgical excision procedure (LEEP)—A thin wire loop that carries an electric current remove abnormal areas of the cervix.

Conization: A cone-shaped piece of the cervix that contains the abnormal cells is removed.

Signs of Cervical Cancer

Note: Women with early cervical cancers and pre-cancers usually have no symptoms!

That is why regularly scheduled exams are essential, so be sure to get a well woman exam once a year.

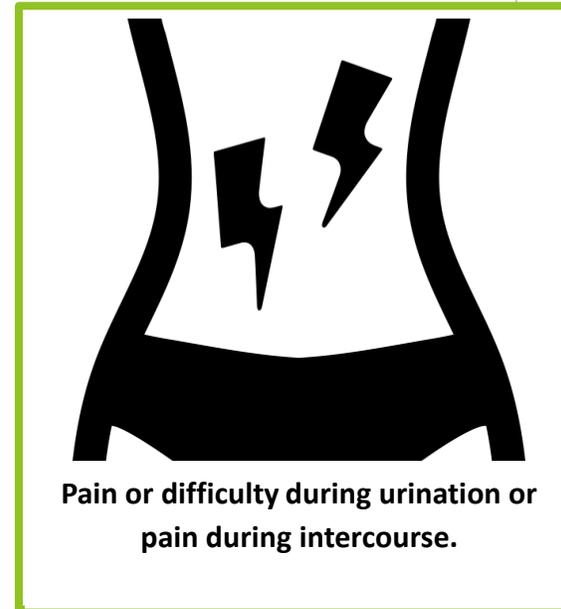
Remember...cervical cancer starts when cells within the cervix grow out of control.

Symptoms often do not begin until the cancer grows into nearby tissue.

When this happens, common symptoms are:

- Abnormal bleeding
- Pelvic pain not related to your menstrual cycle
- Heavy or unusual discharge that may be watery, thick, and possibly have a bad odor
- Increased urinary frequency
- Pain during urination or difficulty urinating

If you ever do have any of these symptoms, please see a health care professional right away.



Types of Cervical Cancer

The most common type of cervical cancer is *squamous cell carcinoma*.

- ▶ Squamous cells are thin, flat cells that look like fish scales, and are found in the tissue that forms the surface of the skin.
- ▶ The squamous cells right at the entry of the cervix, at the outermost layer of the skin, are most susceptible to *human papilloma virus* (HPV).
- ▶ This is why we do the Pap test and will discuss your test results with you.

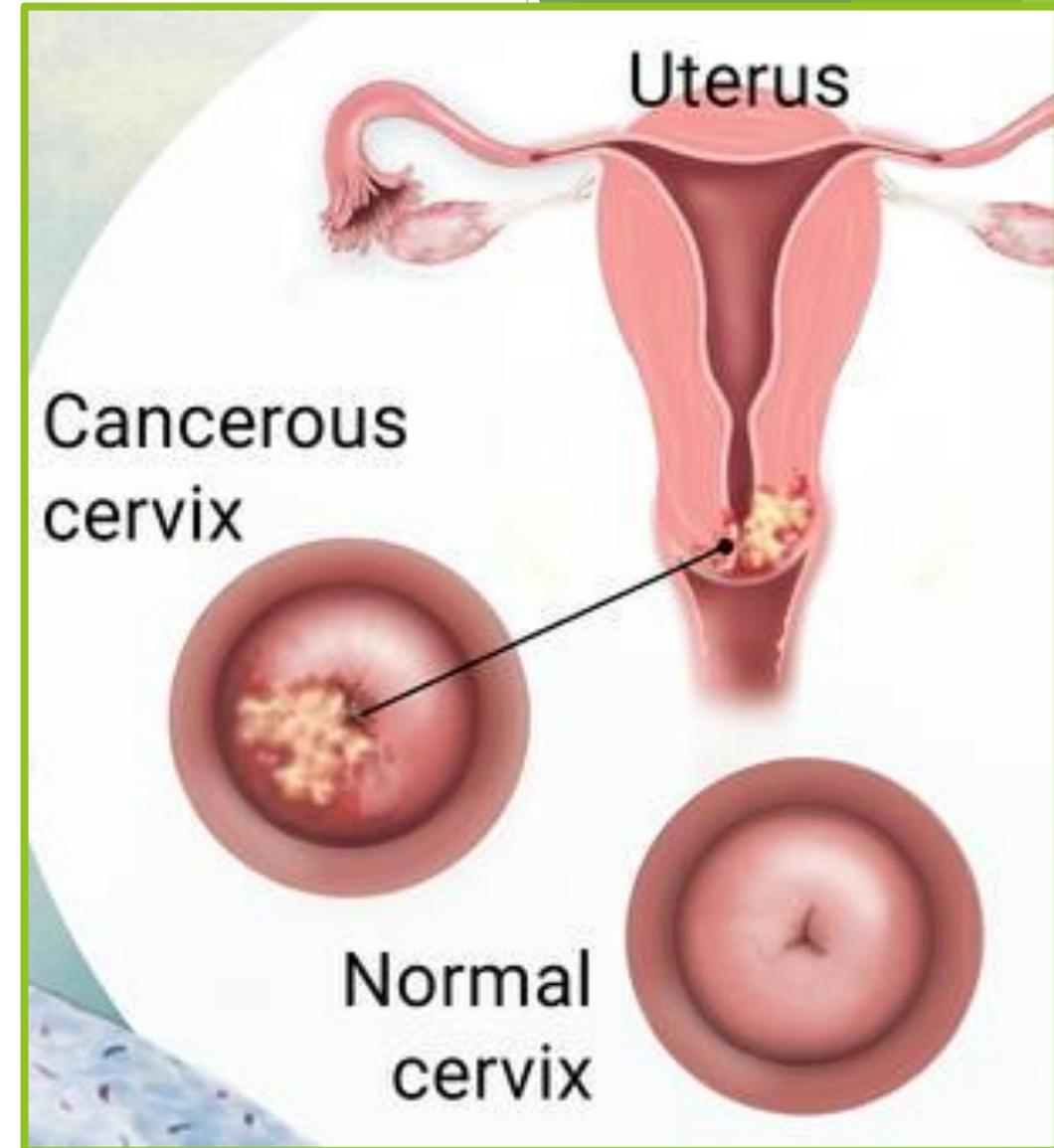


Image source: <https://www.cancer.gov/types/cervical/understanding-cervical-changes>

Facts About Cervical Cancer

By age 50, at least 80% of women will have acquired human papillomavirus, also known as HPV.

- ▶ Men can pass to women and women can pass it to men.
- ▶ Most people with HPV show no symptoms.
- ▶ In most cases HPV goes away, but women with persistent HPV are at risk for developing cancer.

What Can You Do for Your Cervical Health?

- ▶ A Pap test is recommended starting at age 21.
- ▶ Women aged 21–29 years should have a Pap test alone every 3 years.
- ▶ Women aged 30–65 years should have a Pap test and an HPV test (co-testing) every 5 years. It is acceptable to have a Pap test alone every 3 years.
- ▶ Women who have a history of cervical cancer, are infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), have a weakened immune system, or who were exposed to diethylstilbestrol (DES) before birth may require more frequent screening.

Talk to your Doctor today about the Pap test and HPV screening!



An Important Note about HPV

HPV is not the same as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV, which causes AIDS) or herpes simplex virus (HSV, which causes cold sores and genital herpes).



Thank you for being with us today!

This Patient Activity Guide is the property of the CAP Foundation.
The material within is presented for entirely non-profit, educational purposes.
Permission to reproduce this work, in part or in entirety, for any purpose other than use
in the See, Test & Treat program must be granted in writing by the CAP Foundation.