

Protect Yourself from Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer happens when cells grow out of control in the cervix. It is a slow-growing cancer that may not show signs at first.

Most cervical cancer is caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a common virus that spreads through sex. Other risk factors for cervical cancer include:

- Smoking
- Having a weakened immune system
- Family history of cervical cancer

You can prevent cervical cancer by getting regular Pap tests and the HPV vaccine. It is very treatable if found early.



Get Regular Pap Tests

A Pap test (or Pap smear) screens for cervical cancer. In general, you should get a test every 3 years starting at age 21. Starting at age 30, you only need one every 5 years. How often you get a Pap test depends on your test results and doctor's advice. Talk to your doctor about when and how often you should get a Pap test.

During the procedure, your doctor will take samples from the cervix to test. It usually doesn't hurt, but you may feel brief discomfort. You can get a Pap test during a regular GYN checkup.

What If I Get Abnormal Test Results?

Your doctor may repeat the Pap test and/or suggest other tests. The results from these tests will help your doctor decide on the best course of action.



Get the HPV Vaccine

The HPV vaccine protects against the types of HPV that cause most cases of cervical cancer and genital warts. It also protects against the types that cause cancer of the vulva, vagina, and anus. The vaccine works best when given to preteens before having sex. It can be given as early as age 9 and until age 26. You should still get regular Pap tests after getting the HPV vaccine.



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