

CERVICAL CANCER

What is cervical cancer?

Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. Cancer is always named for the part of the body where it starts, even if it spreads to other body parts later. When cancer starts in the cervix, it is called cervical cancer. The cervix is the lower, narrow end of the uterus. The cervix connects the vagina (the birth canal) to the upper part of the uterus. The uterus (or womb) is where a baby grows when a woman is pregnant. Cervical cancer is the easiest gynecologic cancer to prevent with regular screening tests and follow-up. It also is highly curable when found and treated early.

What increases risk for cervical cancer?

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection
- Smoking cigarettes, Age older than 60 & Being overweight
- Use of certain hormone or fertility medicine
- A family history of ovarian, breast, or colorectal cancer
- Exposure to diethylstilbestrol (DES) when mother was pregnant

Signs and symptoms of cervical cancer

- Unusual vaginal bleeding after sex
- Vaginal bleeding or discharge between your normal monthly periods
- Vaginal bleeding or discharge after menopause
- Pelvic pain or low back pain
- Swelling in your legs from fluid build-up

How is cervical cancer diagnosed?

- **A Pap smear** is done during a pelvic exam to check for abnormal cells in the cervix. Cells are collected and tested for cancer or HPV.
- **A colposcopy** is a procedure used to look more closely at cervix and vagina.
- **A biopsy** is a small sample of tissue removed from cervix. The tissue is sent to the lab and tested for cancer. The sample may be taken during a colposcopy or a cervical cone biopsy.
- **A CT or MRI** may show the location and size of the cancer. Patient may be given contrast liquid to help the cancer show up better in pictures.

How is cervical cancer treated?

- **Radiation therapy** is used to kill cancer cells with high-energy x-ray beams.
- **Chemotherapy** is medicine given to kill cancer cells.
- **Targeted therapy** is medicine given to kill cancer cells without harming healthy cells.
- **Surgery** may be needed to remove the cervical cancer. Ovaries, fallopian tubes, and uterus may be removed if the cancer has spread to these areas. All or part of vagina, bladder, or end of bowel may also be removed.

How can I prevent cervical cancer?

- See doctor regularly for a Pap test that can find cervical pre cancers.
- Get the HPV vaccine. It protects against the types of HPV that most often cause cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers.

Reference:

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