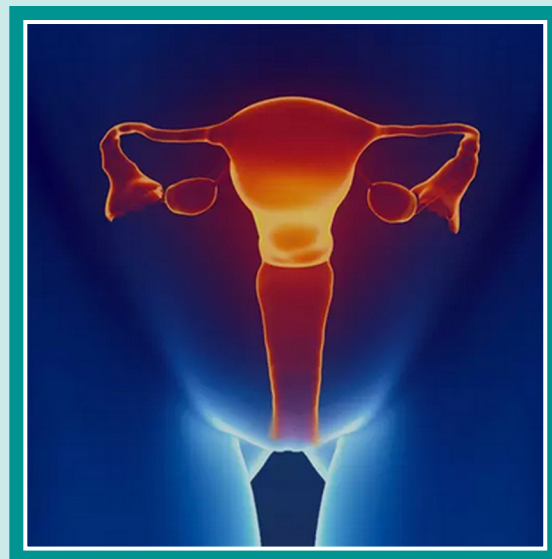


Preventing, Detecting, and Treating Cervical Cancer

The cervix is the lower part of a woman's uterus, where a baby grows during pregnancy. Cervical cancer causes more than 4,000 deaths in the U.S. each year. It is caused by some forms of a virus called HPV.

HPV is spread through sexual contact. HPV will infect four out of five people at some point. Your immune system may get rid of it naturally, but it may cause cervical cancer in women.

Cervical cancer is preventable, detectable, and treatable.



Risk Factors

You are at greater risk of getting cervical cancer if you:

- Have had many sexual partners or are sexually active at a young age
- Smoke
- Had three or more pregnancies
- Have HIV, the virus that can lead to AIDS
- Used birth control pills for a long time
- Have a weakened immune system
- Are overweight

Prevention

Most HPV infections can be prevented by getting a vaccine. Doctors recommend that the shot be given to children between ages 11 and 12 so they receive the shot before they are at risk of infection.

Different ways to prevent cancer include:

Changing lifestyle or eating habits that are risky.

Avoiding things known to cause cancer, like smoking and an unhealthy diet.

Taking medicines to treat a precancerous condition or to keep cancer from starting.

Symptoms

Women with cervical cancer, or abnormal cells that can lead to cancer, may have no symptoms. As the cancer grows or spreads the most common symptoms are unusual vaginal bleeding or discharge, pain during sex, and pain in the pelvis. More advanced disease may cause swelling of the legs, trouble urinating or having a bowel movement, or blood in the urine.

Detection

Screening for cervical cancer using Pap tests has decreased the number of new cases and deaths since the 1950s. Your health care provider will swab your cervix during a routine exam for a Pap test or HPV test and will tell you how often to be tested.

Treatment

Treatments for cervical cancer include drugs, radiation, chemotherapy, and surgery or some combination of the three.



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For more information and health resources, visit medlineplus.gov/cervicalcancer.html