

CERVICAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

About

No woman should die of cervical cancer.

Cervical Cancer is a malignant tumor of the cervix, the lowermost part of the uterus.

Nearly 13,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year, but the disease is virtually always preventable.

You can help prevent cervical cancer by getting screened regularly and vaccinated for HPV.

Most Common Risk Factors

- **HPV:** Cervical cancer is almost always caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is very common in the United States. It is passed from one person to another during sex.
- **Smoking:** Women who smoke are about twice as likely as non-smokers to get cervical cancer. Tobacco by-products have been found in the cervical mucus of women who smoke.
- **Having a weakened Immune System:** Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS, damages a woman's immune system and puts them at higher risk for HPV infections.
- **Chlamydia infection:** Chlamydia is a relatively common kind of bacteria that can infect the reproductive system. It is spread by sexual contact. Chlamydia infection can cause pelvic inflammation, leading to infertility.



Prevention

Screening Tests

Two tests help prevent cervical cancer or find it early.

The **Pap test** (or Pap smear) looks for precancerous cells on the cervix that might become cervical cancer if they are not treated appropriately.

The **HPV test** looks for the virus that can cause these cell changes. The Pap test is recommended for women between ages 21 and 65, and can be done in a doctor's office or clinic. If you are 30 years old or older, you may choose to have an HPV test along with the Pap test. Your doctor can perform both the Pap and HPV tests at the same time.

HPV Vaccine

Get the **HPV vaccine** if you are in the age group for which it's recommended. The HPV vaccine protects against the types of HPV that most often cause cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers. HPV can also cause cancers of the penis in men, and anal, neck and head cancers in both men and women.

The HPV vaccine is recommended for preteens (both boys and girls) aged 11 to 12 years, but can be given as early as age 9 and until age 26.