

## Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is a disease in which cancer cells form in the cervix or the lower part of a woman's uterus. While cervical cancer was once a leading cause of cancer death for women, the number of deaths has decreased dramatically due to prevention and early detection.

### Statistics

- This year alone, 11,070 new cases of cervical cancer will be diagnosed in women in the United States.
- In 2008, 3,870 women in the United States are expected to die from cervical cancer.
- When detected early before the cancer spreads, women have a 92-percent survival rate after five years.
- One in 145 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer during her lifetime.
- There are approximately 250,000 cervical cancer survivors in the United States.

### Risk Factors

- **Human Papilloma viruses (HPVs):** A group of viruses passed from person to person through sexual contact that infects the cervix. HPV is the primary risk factor for cervical cancer. Some types of HPVs can cause changes to the cells in the cervix and these changes can cause cancer.
- **Age:** Cervical cancer most often occurs in women younger than 50 and rarely develops in women younger than 20.
- **Weakened Immune System:** Women with HIV or taking drugs that suppress the immune system have a higher-than-average risk of developing cervical cancer.
- **Sexual History:** Women who have had many sexual partners or have had intercourse with a man with many sexual partners may be at a higher risk of developing cervical cancer because they have a higher risk of HPV infection.
- **Smoking:** Women who smoke and also have an HPV infection are approximately twice as likely as non-smokers to get cervical cancer.
- **Birth Control:** Long-term use of birth control pills may increase the risk of cervical cancer among women with HPV infection.
- **Childbirth:** Multiple childbirths can increase risk of developing cervical cancer among women with HPV infection.

### Symptoms and Signs

The early changes related to cervical cancer may not come with warning signs; however, women may notice symptoms and pain as the disease worsens. If any of the following symptoms or signs are present, women are encouraged to consult their doctor immediately for proper testing:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding
- Pelvic pain
- Bleeding after menopause
- Unusual vaginal discharge
- Pain during intercourse

### Tips for Prevention

- Screening
  - The most effective screening tool for cervical cancer is a Pap test, in which a small sample of cells is collected and then examined under a microscope.
  - All women should have a Pap test to screen for cervical cancer at least once every year beginning at age 21 or approximately three years after beginning to have sexual intercourse, whichever comes first, regardless of whether they have received the HPV vaccine.
  - Women in their 30s with three consecutive normal Pap tests may limit screenings to every two or three years.
  - Doctors may recommend that women have more frequent screening if certain risk factors are present.
- Vaccine
  - The first vaccine developed to prevent HPV infections that can cause cervical cancer has been approved for use in females age 9-26 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

### Treatment Options

All women with cervical cancer should consult with a medical oncologist to determine their specific treatment needs. There are several treatment options for cervical cancer including chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and surgery. Each method may be used alone, or in combination with other treatments.

Source: National Cancer Institute and American Cancer Society



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