



Let's Learn the Basics about Cervical Cancer

What is cancer?

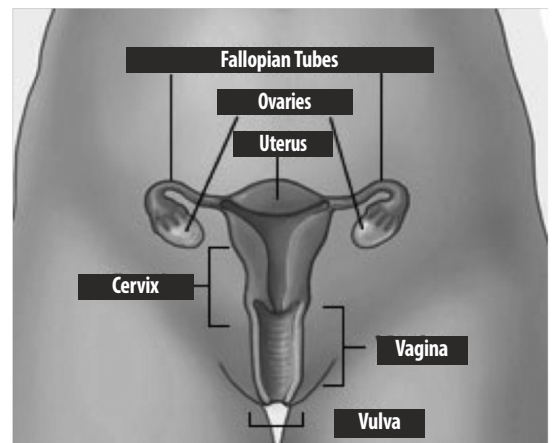
The body is made up of millions and millions of living cells. Normally, cells grow, divide to make new cells, and die in an organized way. Cancer begins when cells in a part of the body change and grow out of control.

What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer women can get in the **cervix**. The cervix is the lower, narrow end of the uterus.

The cells in the cervix do not change into cancer all of a sudden. Instead, it happens slowly as normal cells begin to change little by little into **precancer cells**.

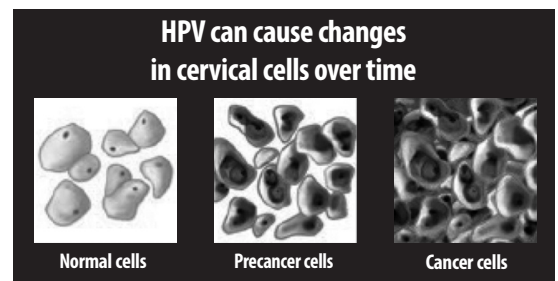
These changes in the cells are the first sign of a problem in the cervix. If they are not treated, precancer cells may turn into cancer over time.



What causes cervical cancer?

The **human papilloma virus** or HPV causes almost all cervical cancers. This virus is passed through skin to skin contact, especially during sex. Other things that can increase your chances of getting cervical cancer are:

- Smoking
- Having the human immunodeficiency virus or HIV
- Using birth control pills for five years or more



How can you prevent cervical cancer?

There are two important ways:

1. Preventing precancer cells by:

- avoid getting HPV
- getting an HPV vaccine
- avoid smoking

2. Finding and treating precancer cells before they become cancer



How can you find cervical precancer or cancer?

The best way is by getting a regular Pap test.

The Pap test is an exam where the doctor takes a few cells from the cervix by gently rubbing the cervix with a small brush or wooden stick. Then the doctor sends them to the lab so they can check to see if there are any pre-cancer or cancer cells.



When should you get a Pap test?

All women should follow these guidelines:

Pap testing should begin at age 21. Pap testing should NOT happen before the age of 21.

Women between the ages of 21 and 29 should have a Pap test every 3 years.

Women between the ages of 30 and 65 can choose between 2 options:

- get a Pap test every 3 years **OR**
- get a Pap test and an HPV test together every 5 years

Women **over age 65** who have had regular Pap testing with normal results for the last 10 years should NOT get a Pap test.

Women who have been vaccinated against HPV should still follow these guidelines.



Warning!

Visit your doctor as soon as possible if you have...

- any discharge or liquid that comes out from the vagina that is not normal,
- blood spots or light bleeding when you are not having your period, or
- bleeding or pain during sex.

REMEMBER: Cervical cancer can be CURED if it is found early. The Pap test can find pre-cancer cells before they become cancer.





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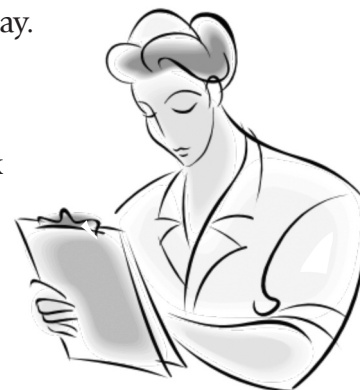
Elena's Story about Cervical Cancer

Hi, I am Elena and I want to share my story with you.

I did not do a very good job taking care of my health until I met Maria. Maria is a community health worker. She teaches about the importance of Pap tests and helps women get their pap tests done. I am glad I listened to her.

Honestly, I did not want to get the Pap test because I did not want the doctor to see me naked. I was also scared of what the test could find. Maria helped me deal with my fears. She explained to me that:

- The doctors, technicians and nurses that do the Pap test, do them every day. They are professionals and try their best to make you feel comfortable.
- You can ask that a female doctor or nurse see you.
- They also give you a gown and blanket to cover you. The doctor will look very briefly under the blanket, but he will not uncover you.
- It is normal to be afraid of the test results, but knowing if something is wrong could help you get treatment early, when it works best and can save your life.



She also explained what happens during a Pap test:

- First, the nurse gives you a gown and gives you time alone to take off your clothes and put on the gown.
 - Then, when you are ready, the doctor and nurse come back inside and ask you to lie down on the exam table.
 - The doctor briefly checks your vagina to see if you have any signs of infection or other problems.
 - Next, the doctor slides into the vagina a small object called a speculum. The speculum holds the walls of the vagina apart so the cervix can be seen.
 - Then, the doctor uses a small wooden stick to rub and get few cells from the cervix and sends them to the lab.
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After Maria explained all of this, I finally decided to make an appointment with my doctor. I went to my appointment and the nurse and doctor were very helpful and made me feel very comfortable. It only took 15 minutes to get the Pap test done!

Two weeks later, I got a call from my doctor. She told me that they found precancer cells in my cervix. She explained that this was not cancer but that if I did not get treatment, it could turn into cancer. I was a little bit nervous but I went through the treatment. Today, I have no precancer cells!

So do not wait, make time and get a Pap test. Talk with your doctor about it. The Pap test can save your life!



Important

To find out about free or low-cost Pap tests and where to go, call or visit:

- **CDC's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program**
 - Phone number: 1-800-232-4636
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp>
- **Your local health department**
 - http://www.healthguideusa.org/local_health_departments.htm
- **Your local health center**
 - http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/Search_HCC.aspx



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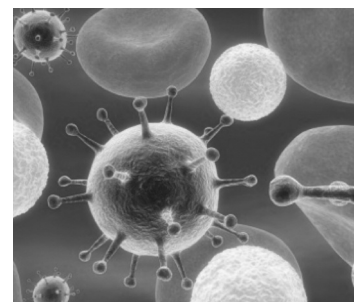
What You Need to Know about HPV

This is Dr. Elvia Morales. She wants to share with you the most common questions her patients ask about the Human Papilloma Virus or HPV. This virus is the main cause of cervical cancer.

What is HPV?

HPV is a very common virus. There are many types of HPV. HPV can infect the genital areas:

- In women, the genital area includes the vulva, vagina, cervix and anus
- In men, the genital area includes the penis, the skin around the testicles and anus



The infection has no signs or symptoms and many times goes away on its own. Doctors do not know why HPV sometimes stays in the body for a long time.

How do people get HPV?

Most often, HPV is passed on during vaginal, oral or anal sex.

HPV can affect your body in different ways:

- Some types of HPV can cause changes in a woman's cervix that can lead to cervical cancer. This happens when HPV stays in the cervix for many years.
- Other types of HPV can cause genital warts in men and women. Genital warts are raised growths or bumps on the surface of the skin. This type of HPV does NOT cause cervical cancer.



Are there any tests to find out if I have HPV?

Yes. It is called the HPV test. It looks for the virus that can cause precancer cells in your cervix. Sometimes this test is done together with the Pap test. To make sure the test works correctly you should:

- avoid having sex, or using any spermicidal foams, creams or jellies for 2 days before the test, AND
- schedule the test during a time when you do NOT have your menstrual period.



The HPV test only works for women.

Is there treatment for HPV?

There is no treatment for this virus.

But if the doctor finds precancer cells, he can use certain procedures to destroy or remove these cells. This will prevent them from turning into cancer cells.



Can I prevent passing HPV to my partner?

If you use condoms all the time and in the right way, you may lower your chances of passing HPV to your partner.

But you should know that HPV can infect those areas not covered by the condom. Condoms will not protect you completely from getting infected with HPV.



Should I talk to my partner about HPV?

Yes, you can tell your partner that...

- HPV is very common
- There is no test yet for men to find out if they have HPV
- Getting HPV does not mean that you are having sex with someone else. It's possible that you or your partner already had the virus but did not know it



I heard about an HPV vaccine. Is it true?

Yes, there is a vaccine! But for it to work, you have to get it at a young age, beginning in the teen years and up to age 21 for men, and age 26 for women.





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Should I Vaccinate my Kids Against HPV?

Consuelo has an appointment today to get her Pap test. She has heard about an HPV vaccine for children and wants to talk with her doctor about it.

Consuelo: Is it true that there is an HPV vaccine for children?

Dr. Morales: Yes. There are two vaccines for young people that protect against HPV: Gardasil and Cervarix.

Consuelo: But I don't understand why kids need to be vaccinated against HPV. I thought HPV can only be passed on through sex.

Dr. Morales: The vaccine works better if people get it before they start having sex. The vaccine will protect them when they do have sex, even if it is later as adults. Remember, most people who get HPV do not know they have it. Many only find out about it many years later.

Consuelo: Now I understand...

Dr. Morales: The vaccine has many benefits:



- It prevents all types of cancers related to HPV. Besides cervical cancer, women can get cancer in the vagina, vulva, anus, mouth and throat. Men can get cancer in the penis, anus, mouth and throat.
- It prevents the spread of HPV among people.
- It helps you avoid the costs related to cancer treatment.
- It reduces the chances of dying due to cervical cancer.

Consuelo: My daughter is 13 and my son is 15. Are they the right age to be vaccinated?

Dra. Morales: Yes. All kids should get the vaccine starting at 11 or 12 years old. Women can get the vaccine until age 26 and men until age 21.

Consuelo: Does the vaccine have side effects?

Dra. Morales: Yes. There may be some pain and redness or swelling in the arm where you got the shot. Some people also get fever, nausea, dizziness or headache.



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Consuelo: How can I pay for the vaccine?

Dra. Morales: The vaccine works by getting three injections in a period of 6 months. Each shot costs around \$130. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires all new private insurance plans to cover HPV vaccines and Pap tests. So if you have private health insurance, the cost is covered.

If you do not have health insurance, there are some other options:

- **Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program:** covers vaccines for children ages 18 and under who are eligible for Medicaid, uninsured, or their insurance plan does not cover the vaccine.
- **Medicaid:**
 - ✓ covers the vaccine for young men and women ages 19 and 20 that are eligible for Medicaid
 - ✓ covers the vaccine for anyone 21 or older that is newly eligible for Medicaid in states where Medicaid was expanded due to the new ACA law
- **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP):** covers the vaccine in states where the CHIP program is separate from the Medicaid program.

If you are a young adult without health insurance...

- Call the Vaccines Access Program at
1-877-822-2911
Women may get Cervarix vaccine for free.
- Call the Merck Vaccine Patient Assistance Program at
1-800-293-3881
Women and men may get Gardasil vaccine for free.