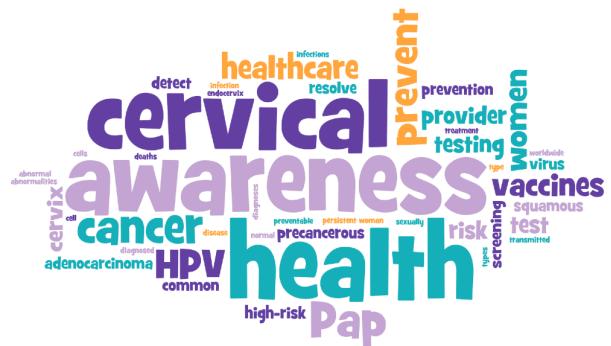


HEALTHY LINKS

Brought to you by Dr. Susan Taylor
 Member Health and Human Services Committee
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January is Cervical Health Awareness Month
 Learn more at www.nccc-online.org

From The National
 Cervical Cancer Coalition

WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?

The cervix is the lower portion of the uterus which extends into the vagina. During delivery, the cervix slowly widens or dilates to allow the birth of the baby. Cancer can develop in the cervix. There are two types of cervical cancers.

Most cervical cancers (80 to 90 percent) are a type called squamous cell cancers. Adenocarcinoma is the second most common type of cervical cancer, accounting for the remaining 10 to 20 percent of cases. While less common than squamous cell carcinoma, the incidence of adenocarcinoma is on the rise, particularly in younger women.

How many women get cervical cancer?

More than 13,000 women in the United States will be diagnosed with cervical cancer each year, and more than 4,000 of women will die. Cervical cancer is the fourth most common type of cancer for women worldwide, but because it develops over time, it is also one of the most preventable types of cancer.

Deaths from cervical cancer in the United States continue to decline by approximately 2 percent a year. This decline is primarily due to the widespread use of the Pap test to detect cervical abnormalities and allow for early treatment. Most women who have abnormal cervical cell changes that progress to cervical cancer have never had a Pap test or have not had one in the previous three to five years.

Who gets cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer tends to occur during midlife. It is most frequently diagnosed in women between the ages of 35 and 44. It rarely affects women under age 20, and more than 15 percent of diagnoses are made in women older than 65. But in women over 65, cancer typically occurs in women who were not receiving regular screening.

What causes cervical cancer?

A viral infection causes cervical cancer. Human papillomavirus (HPV) is found in 99% of cervical cancers. There are over 100 different types of HPV, but most of them do not cause cervical cancer. More than 70% of cervical cancer cases are caused by two types of the virus, HPV-16 and HPV-18, often referred to as high-risk HPV types.

How do women get HPV?

HPV is estimated to be the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. In fact, **by age 50 approximately 80% of women have been infected with some type of HPV**. The majority of women infected with the HPV virus do NOT develop cervical cancer.

Why Is HPV A Concern For Black Women?

Black women are less likely than white women to **get vaccinated** against HPV. Black women do not complete the **full set of vaccine** (given in 2 or 3 doses) as often as white women. The vaccines don't target the types of HPV that Black women tend to get, so they **aren't as effective**. Black women have a higher rate of **cervical cancer** associated with HPV than white women. There is a **lack of awareness** about HPV and the HPV vaccine in the Black community.



For most women the HPV infection does not last long; 90% of HPV infections resolve on their own within 2 years. In a small number of women the HPV virus will not go away and they are considered to have "persistent infection. A woman with a persistent HPV infection is at greater risk of developing abnormal cervical cells and cervical cancer than a woman whose infection resolves on its own. In a small number of cases and usually over a long period of time (from several years to several decades), some of these abnormal cells may then develop into cervical cancer.

What Are Symptoms of Cervical Cancer?

Precancerous cervical cell changes and early cancers of the cervix generally do not cause symptoms. For this reason, regular screening through Pap and HPV tests can help catch precancerous cell changes early and prevent the development of cervical cancer.

Possible symptoms of more advanced disease may include abnormal or irregular vaginal bleeding, pain during sex, or vaginal discharge. Notify your healthcare provider if you experience:

- Abnormal bleeding, such as:
 - Bleeding between regular menstrual periods
 - Bleeding after sexual intercourse
 - Bleeding after douching
 - Bleeding after a pelvic exam
 - Bleeding after menopause
- Pelvic pain not related to your menstrual cycle
- Heavy or unusual discharge that may be watery, thick, and possibly have a foul odor
- Increased urinary frequency
- Pain during urination

These symptoms could also be signs of other health problems, not related to cervical cancer. If you experience any of the symptoms above, talk to a healthcare provider.

HPV vaccines can help prevent infection from both high risk HPV types that can lead to cervical cancer and low risk types of HPV infections that cause genital warts. The vaccines prevent the HPV types that cause 90% of cervical cancer cases.

The Center for Disease Control recommends all boys and girls get HPV vaccine at age 11 or 12. Tested in thousands of people in many countries, HPV vaccines have proven to be safe and well tolerated.

The HPV vaccine produces a stronger immune response when taken during the preteen years. For this reason, **up until age 14, only two doses are the vaccine are required**. Women and men can get the vaccine up to age 45 but **for those 15 and older, a full three-dose series is needed**.



Common Questions about HPV Vaccines

Will the vaccine help my HPV go away faster?

No, the vaccines do not treat HPV or related diseases.

Why should my son get the vaccine? I thought it was only for girls.

Males are at risk for HPV, too. HPV vaccination can protect boys against genital warts and anal cancer.

My children are not yet sexually active, do they need the vaccine?

The vaccine is most effective before the onset of sexual activity. The CDC recommends vaccinating girls / boys at 11-12 years old.

My children are older than 11 or 12. Is it too late to get the vaccine?

The vaccine has been approved for males and females through age 45.

If I get the vaccine I won't have to worry about HPV anymore, right?

HPV vaccines will not eliminate all HPV or cervical cancer. The vaccines prevent the HPV types that cause 90% of cervical cancer cases. But there are other types of HPV (not covered in the vaccine) that could cause disease.

If someone is sexually active can they still get the vaccine?

Those who are already sexually active may have been exposed to one of the types of HPV that the vaccines protect against. There is still benefit though in that is unlikely that they have been exposed to all types covered by the vaccines.

How safe is the vaccine?

The safety of HPV vaccines was studied in clinical trials before they were licensed. For Gardasil 9 (released in 2014), over 15,000 individuals participated in these trials. The first version of Gardasil (released in 2006) was studied in over 29,000 participants.

What are the most common side effects?

- Soreness where you got the shot.
- Redness and soreness and some pain where the shot is given.
- About 1 person in 10 will get a mild fever.
- About 1 person in 30 will get itching where they got the shot.
- About 1 person in 60 will experience a moderate fever.

These symptoms do not last long and go away on their own.



How can I pay for the vaccine?

Most insurance companies will cover the cost of vaccination. If your does not, or if you are uninsured, there are programs that can help.

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program is a federal program that offers vaccines at no cost for eligible children, ages 18 and under, through VFC-enrolled doctors. Other alternatives include finding a local Planned Parenthood clinic or local health department to ask about options for reduced cost or sliding scale programs.

Having a Pap test every
two years
can reduce the risk of
cervical cancer
by up to **96%**



IMPORTANT!

Women need a regular Pap test, even if they have received the HPV/cervical cancer vaccine. Even if a woman has had the HPV/cervical cancer vaccine, she will continue to require her regular cervical cancer screen by the Pap test and HPV test when recommended. The vaccines don't protect against all types of HPV that can cause cancer. Early detection saves lives.