

Cervical Cancer Screening



Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that occurs in the cervix, the lower part of the uterus.

Symptoms

Early-stage cervical cancer may have no signs or symptoms. Signs and side effects of more advanced cervical cancer may include:

- Vaginal bleeding after intercourse, between periods, or after menopause
- Abnormal vaginal discharge that may be heavy and/or have a foul odor
- Pelvic pain
- Pain during intercourse

Other common symptoms include:

- Pain
- Fatigue
- Stress
- Anxious mood
- Depressed mood

Risk factors

- Multiple sexual partners
- Early sexual activity
- Smoking
- Sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and HIV/AIDS
- A weakened immune system

Causes

- Most cervical cancer is caused by a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV).
- HPV spreads through sexual contact with a person who already carries it. It can also occur when the virus enters the body through a cut, abrasion, or other small tear in the skin.
- Not all types of HPV cause cervical cancer. Some of them cause genital warts, but other types may not cause any symptoms. It's important to get vaccinated against HPV so you are more protected.

Facts about cervical cancer

- HPV is the leading cause of cervical cancer.
- The simplest way to prevent cervical cancer is to get vaccinated against HPV.
- People of all ages are at risk of cervical cancer, and it is the fourth most common cancer among people with uteruses globally.
- Cervical cancer may be dangerous or life threatening, but it is usually treatable by a medical professional.
- Cervical cancer is most commonly diagnosed in people ages 35–50. It rarely develops in people younger than 20.
- A family history of cervical cancer could increase your risk for developing it.
- Regular HPV tests and Pap tests are the best way to detect cervical cancer early.

What should you do?

Get screened regularly.

- Have your first Pap test at 21 years old. If your results are normal, continue getting a Pap test every three years. Always follow your doctor's guidance.
- After age 25, it is recommended to have an HPV test every five years through age 65. If HPV testing alone is not available, you can get screened with an HPV/Pap cotest. Talk with your doctor about the best option for you.

Only stop screening if:

- You are over 65 and have had normal Pap test results for many years.
- Your cervix was removed for non-cancerous conditions.