



Cervical Cancer Fact Sheet

Introduction

This year, an estimated 12,360 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer and approximately 4,020 will die of the disease. Cervical cancer used to be one of the most common causes of cancer death in women in the United States. Today, lives are saved because of regular screening with a Pap test (also called a Pap smear).

At Risk

- Women who have the human papillomavirus (HPV), a sexually transmitted virus
- Women who began having sex at an early age
- Women who have multiple sex partners
- Women who don't have regular Pap tests
- Women who smoke
- Women who have used birth control pills for a long time
- Women with weakened immune systems, such as women who have human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- Women who are overweight or obese
- Women who have a close relative, such as a sister or mother, who has had cervical cancer
- Women who were exposed to diethylstilbestrol (DES) before birth

Risk Reduction and Early Detection

- **Avoid infection with HPV by practicing safer sex. (Condoms can't give complete protection against HPV because the virus can infect areas that aren't covered by a condom.)**
- **Don't smoke, or, if you do smoke, quit.**
- **All women should begin cervical cancer testing at age 21. Women aged 21 to 29 should receive a Pap test every 3 years. HPV testing should not be used for screening in this age group unless used as a follow-up for an abnormal Pap test.**
- **Women between the ages of 30 and 65 should have a Pap test plus an HPV test every 5 years. This is the preferred approach, but it is also OK to have a Pap test alone every 3 years. Women at high risk, exposed to DES before birth or with a weakened immune system may need to be screened more often.**
- **Talk with your health care professional about the HPV vaccine. The HPV vaccine protects against the types of HPV that are most likely to cause cancer. It's most effective if a person is vaccinated before becoming sexually active. The vaccine is recommended for girls who are age 11 to 12. Girls may also be vaccinated at age 9 or 10. Girls may get a "catch-up" vaccine up to age 18. Young women age 19 to 26 who have never been vaccinated may also get the vaccine.**
- **Women over age 65 who have had regular cervical cancer testing with normal results should not be tested for cervical cancer. Women with a history of serious cervical pre-cancer should continue to be tested for at least 20 years after that diagnosis, even if testing continues past age 65.**
- **Women who have had a hysterectomy should stop screening unless the surgery was done as a treatment for cervical cancer or pre-cancer. Women who have had a hysterectomy that left behind the cervix should continue to follow the guidelines above.**

Symptoms

Precancerous conditions in the cervix usually don't cause symptoms and are not detected unless a woman has a pelvic exam and a Pap test. A woman should talk with her health care professional right away if she has any of the following symptoms:

- Increased or unusual discharge from the vagina
- Blood spots or light bleeding at times other than during a normal period

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- Menstrual bleeding that lasts longer and is heavier than usual
- Bleeding or pain during or after sex
- Bleeding after menopause

Treatment

- Cervical cancer is treated through surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. These therapies may be given alone or in combination with one another. Treatment depends on the stage of the cancer, the type of tumor cells and a woman's medical condition.

Updated 02/2014

For more information about cervical cancer, visit
www.PreventCancer.org

This fact sheet features information from the following sources:

American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures, 2014.

American Cancer Society. Cervical Cancer Overview. <http://cancer.org/Cancer/CervicalCancer/OverviewGuide/>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Condoms Fact Sheet in Brief.

<http://www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/brief.html#Consistent>

National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health. CervicalCancer PDQ®. <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/cervical/>;

<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/prevention/cervical/healthprofessional>.

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