

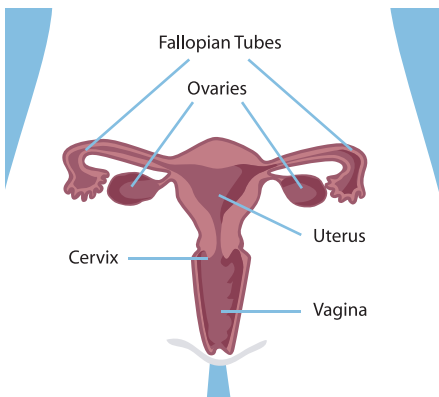
# HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



## Let's Talk About Cervical Cancer

**Cervical** (SIR-vih-kul) cancer is cancer of the cervix (SIR-viks). The cervix is the opening of the uterus (YOO-ter-us), or womb. It connects the uterus with the vagina (vuh-JY-nuh).



### What is Cancer?

There are many kinds of cancer. Cancer means the growth and spread of cells that are not normal. When cells stop behaving normally, they can become cancer cells.

### What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer begins in the cervix. The cervix is the narrow canal between the uterus and the vagina. Screening for cervical cancer can help save your life.<sup>1</sup>

### A Pap Test Can Save Your Life

Fewer women die from cervical cancer now because of a test called the Pap test (also called a "Pap smear").<sup>1</sup> When you have this test, changes in your cervix can be found before they turn into cancer.<sup>1</sup> The test also finds early cancer, when it is most curable.<sup>1</sup>

### What Happens When I Get a Pap Test?

In your doctor's office, you will lie down on an exam table. Your doctor uses an instrument to widen your vagina. He or she rubs a swab against your cervix to scrape off some cervical cells. This test is quick, and for most women it is not painful.

Your doctor places the cells taken from your cervix onto a glass slide. This is sent to a lab and examined. If cancer is found in your cervix, your doctor will talk to you about what type of treatment is right for you.

### Did you know?

Cervical cancer often has no symptoms.<sup>1</sup>  
That's why getting a Pap test regularly is so important.



# Let's Talk About Cervical Cancer

Human papillomavirus (HPV), also called “genital warts” is the main risk for cervical cancer.<sup>2</sup> Ask your doctor about getting a vaccine to prevent HPV infection.

## Did you know:

Cervical cancer is more common in women who don't get regular Pap tests.<sup>2</sup>

## Who Gets Cervical Cancer?<sup>1,2,3</sup>

You have more chance of getting cervical cancer if:

- You are over 40.
- You have genital warts, also called human papilloma (PAP-uh-LO-muh) virus.
- You have had many sexual partners. Or you have had a partner who has had many partners. Or you began having sexual intercourse at an early age.
- You smoke cigarettes. Smokers are about twice as likely to get cervical cancer.
- You have a weakened immune system.
- You have had 7 or more children.
- Your mother or sister has had cervical cancer.
- You are Hispanic or African-American.

Being infected with human papillomavirus (HPV), also called “genital warts,” puts you at higher risk for cervical cancer.<sup>2</sup> You can still prevent cancer by getting a Pap test every year. If you have HPV, talk to your doctor about treatment. Talk about ways to avoid passing it on to other people.

The American Cancer Society recommends that you have your first Pap test three years after you start having sexual intercourse, or when you turn 21, whichever comes first. You should then have a Pap test every year.<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. American Cancer Society. “Cervical Cancer” downloadable document. Available at: <http://documents.cancer.org/115.00/115.00.pdf> Accessed June 28, 2007.
2. National Cancer Institute. What You Need to Know About Cancer of the Cervix. “Risk Factors.” Available at: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/cervix/allpages/print> Accessed June 28, 2007.
3. National Cancer Institute. Cervical Cancer (PDQ): Prevention, Patient Version. Available at: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/prevention/cervical/Patient/page2> Accessed June 28, 2007.

