

Cervical Cancer

What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer starts in the cells lining the cervix. The cervix connects the body of the uterus to the vagina. The cervix is made up of two parts and is covered with different types of cells. The endocervix is the opening of the cervix that leads into the uterus, covered with glandular cells. The exocervix is the outer part of the cervix that can be seen by the doctor during a speculum exam, covered by squamous cells. The transformation zone where these two cell types meet is where most cervical cancers begin.

[What Is Cervical Cancer? | Types of Cervical Cancer | American Cancer Society](#)

[What Is Cervical Cancer? - NCI](#)

Can Cervical Cancer be Prevented?

There are critical steps you can take to prevent cervical cancer. First, if you are eligible, make sure your (or your children) have received the HPV vaccine and get tested regularly. This vaccine can also help prevent other cancers as well.

Since the most common form of cervical cancer starts with pre-cancerous changes, it is critical to find and treat these pre-cancers before they become invasive.

Risk Factors You Can Control

- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) – Get the HPV vaccine and limit your exposure to HPV which is spread from skin to skin contact. High risk HPV causes most cervical cancers.
- Condoms – The use of condoms can help prevent some HPV exposure.
- Tobacco Use – Not smoking is critical way to reduce the risk of cervical pre-cancer and cancer.

NO WOMAN SHOULD EVER DIE OF CERVICAL CANCER.

WITH THE HPV VACCINE AND EFFECTIVE, EARLY SCREENING MAKING TREATMENT EASY, CERVICAL CANCER IS VERY TREATABLE.

Risk Factors You Cannot Control

- Family History – Cervical cancer can run in families, and having a direct female family member can increase your risk. This could be that some families have an inherited condition that makes some women less able to fight off the HPV infection.

[Cervical Cancer Risk Factors | Risk Factors for Cervical Cancer | American Cancer Society](#)

[Cervical Cancer Causes, Risk Factors, and Prevention - NCI](#)

What is Cervical Cancer Screening?

The goal of screening is to find pre-cancerous cells before they are able to develop into cervical cancer making it harder to treat. The following options are used to test for these cells.

- The Papanicolaou test, better known as a Pap test, is used to detect pre-cancerous cells in the cervix.
- The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) test checks for the HPV virus.
- Primary HPV testing is a standalone test for HPV and no Pap test is needed.
- Co-testing includes both HPV and Pap testing at the same time.

Should I Be Screened for Cervical Cancer?

Women ages 25 to 65 with a cervix should get a primary HPV test every 3-5 years. If a primary HPV test is not available, then co-testing every 5 years or a Pap test alone every 3 years is recommended.

[The American Cancer Society Guidelines for the Prevention and Early Detection of Cervical Cancer | American Cancer Society](#)

[Cervical Cancer Screening - NCI](#)

What if I can't afford to get screened?

The worry about the cost of screening and potential treatment can be overwhelming, however Oklahoma has a program to help women who are uninsured or underinsured.

[Take Charge](#)