What we’ll be talking about

- How common is cervical cancer?
- What is cervical cancer?
- What causes it?
- What are the risk factors?
- Can cervical cancer be prevented?
- Tests to find cervical cancer early
- What you can do
- More information

This is a summary of what we’ll be talking about today.

Cervical cancer: How common is it?

- Nearly 13,000 new cases in women in the U.S. each year
- Causes about 4,000 deaths in women in the U.S.
- Over the last 40 years, the cervical cancer death rate has gone down by more than 50% – the main reason for this change is the increased use of the Pap test.

What is cervical cancer?

Cancer that starts in the cervix – the lower part of the uterus (womb) that connects to the vagina (birth canal)

- Two cell types: squamous and glandular
- Cervical cancer tends to occur where the two cell types meet (called the transformation zone).

The part of the cervix closest to the uterus is called the endocervix. The part next to the vagina is the exocervix (or ectocervix).

The 2 main types of cells covering the cervix are squamous cells (on the exocervix) and glandular cells (on the endocervix). These 2 cell types meet at a place called the transformation zone. Most cervical cancers start in the transformation zone.
What is cervical cancer?

- Cancer is the growth of abnormal cells.
- The cells can invade and damage normal tissue.
- Most cervical cancers start in the cells lining the cervix.
- These cells do not suddenly change into cancer. Instead, the normal cells of the cervix first gradually develop pre-cancerous changes that may turn into cancer.
- These changes can be detected by the Pap test and treated to prevent cancer from developing.

Doctors use several terms to describe these pre-cancerous changes, including:

- cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN)
- squamous intraepithelial lesion (SIL)
- dysplasia

Causes of cervical cancer

- The cause of nearly all cervical cancer is human papilloma virus or HPV.
  - HPV is transmitted through skin-to-skin contact.
  - There are many different types of HPV.
    - “Low-risk” types may cause genital warts.
    - “High-risk” types are linked to cancer.
  - Most women who are infected with high-risk HPV will never have any symptoms.

HPV can be passed from one person to another during skin-to-skin contact. One way HPV is spread is through sex, including vaginal, anal, and oral sex.

HPV is a group of more than 150 related viruses, some of which cause a type of growth called papillomas, which are more commonly known as warts.

Doctors believe that a woman must be infected with HPV in order to develop cervical cancer. Although this can mean infection with any of the high-risk types, about two-thirds of all cervical cancers are caused by HPV 16 and 18.
Different cancers have different risk factors. For example, exposing skin to strong sunlight is a risk factor for skin cancer; smoking is a risk factor for lung, bladder, and many other kinds of cancer.

But risk factors don’t tell us everything. Having a risk factor, or even several risk factors, does not mean that you will get the disease. And some people who get the disease may not have any known risk factors. Even if a person with cervical cancer has a risk factor, it’s often very hard to know how much that risk factor may have contributed to the cancer.

Still, researchers have found several risk factors that may increase a woman’s chance of developing cervical cancer.

Infection with HPV is common, and in most people the body can clear the infection by itself. Sometimes, however, the infection does not go away and becomes persistent. Persistent infection, especially when it’s caused by certain high-risk HPV types, can eventually cause certain cancers.
Cervical cancer screening

- Screening is testing to find cancer, or other diseases, early in people who have no symptoms.
- Screening can help find cancers when they are small and have not spread — when they have a better chance of being cured.
- Screening can also find pre-cancerous changes that can be treated to prevent cancer from developing.

Cervical cancer screening is done with
- Pap tests
- HPV tests

What is a Pap test?
- A test which collects cells from the surface of the cervix to check for any abnormal cells
- Abnormal cells can be removed or treated before cervical cancer develops.
- When cancer is detected early, it is easier to treat.
- A pelvic exam is NOT a Pap test; ONLY a Pap test can find early cervical cancer or pre-cancer.

What is a HPV test?
- A test which collects cells from the surface of the cervix to check for HPV — the cells are collected the same way as for a Pap test
- Results can help the doctor decide if more testing is needed
- When both the HPV test and the Pap test are done together for screening, it's called "co-testing."
ACS Guidelines for Cervical Cancer Screening

Women age 21 to 29:
- Pap test every 3 years
- HPV testing should NOT be used unless needed as follow-up after an abnormal Pap test result

Women under age 21 should not be screened.

Starting at age 30:
- Preferred screening is Pap test WITH an HPV test every 5 years (co-testing) until age 65
- Another option is just a Pap test every 3 years until age 65

Some women believe that they can stop cervical cancer screening once they have stopped having children. This is not correct.

Why is co-testing preferred?
Several large studies show greater benefits and reduced harms of co-testing (HPV + Pap test) at longer screening intervals.
Women age 66+ must have 3 or more consecutive negative Pap Tests or 2 or more consecutive negative HPV and Pap tests within the past 10 years (the most recent testing should have occurred in the past 5 years) should stop cervical cancer screening.

Note:
Serious pre-cancers include CIN2 or CIN3 (CIN stands for cervical intraepithelial neoplasia)

Women with a history of CIN2 or CIN3 should continue to have testing for at least 20 years after the abnormality was found.

Hysterectomy without removal of the cervix is called a supra-cervical hysterectomy

Frequent (yearly or every 2 year) cervical screening leads to more harms than benefits, but women who have abnormal screening results may need to have a follow-up Pap test done in 6 months or a year.

Women who are at high risk of cervical cancer because of a history of cervical cancer, a suppressed immune system (for example from HIV infection, organ transplant, or long-term steroid use), or because they were exposed to DES in utero may need to be screened more often. They should follow the recommendations of their healthcare team.
So what can you do to prevent and beat cervical cancer?

Waiting to have sex until you are older can help you avoid HPV. It also helps to limit your number of sexual partners and to avoid having sex with someone who has had many other sexual partners. Although the virus most often spreads between a man and a woman, HPV infection and cervical cancer are seen in women who have only had sex with other women.

One reason condoms cannot protect completely is that they don’t cover every possible HPV-infected area of the body, such as skin of the genital or anal area.

What you can do

- Avoid being exposed to HPV.
- Certain types of sexual behavior increase a woman’s risk of getting genital HPV infection, such as having sex at an early age and having many sexual partners.
- Condoms (“rubbers”) provide some protection against HPV.
- Don’t smoke.
- Get vaccinated.
- Waiting to have sex until you are older can help you avoid HPV.
- It also helps to limit your number of sexual partners and to avoid having sex with someone who has had many other sexual partners.
- Although the virus most often spreads between a man and a woman, HPV infection and cervical cancer are seen in women who have only had sex with other women.
- One reason condoms cannot protect completely is that they don’t cover every possible HPV-infected area of the body, such as skin of the genital or anal area.

What you can do

- Recommended for all girls and boys ages 11-12
- Requires 2 injections at least 6 months apart
- Teens and young adults who start the series later, at ages 15 through 26 years, will continue to need three doses of HPV vaccine to protect against cancer-causing HPV infection.
- Covered by insurance
- About 80% girls and 50% boys are starting the vaccine series nationwide
- Protect against cervical and many other cancers linked to HPV infection
- Routine cervical cancer screening is still necessary for women who have been vaccinated

HPV vaccines can PREVENT cancer!

One of the HPV vaccines has been proven to protect against anal, vulvar, and vaginal cancers (which can also be caused by HPV). Penile and some head and neck cancers are also linked to HPV.

Go to:
cancer.org to read HPV Vaccines for more details.

https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/infographics/vacc-coverage.html
Why don’t parents get their kids vaccinated against HPV?

- Seen as not needed/necessary
- Safety concerns
- They don’t know about the HPV vaccines
- Not recommended by the doctor

Talk to your child’s provider about the HPV vaccines!

The American Cancer Society has information available on the HPV vaccines.

What you can do

Get screened

- This is a well-proven way to prevent cervical cancer and find pre-cancers.
- If a pre-cancer is found it can be treated, stopping cervical cancer before it really starts.

Routine screening offers the best way to find cervical pre-cancers which can be treated to keep cervical cancer from developing. It’s also the best way to find cervical cancer early – when it’s small and has not spread. Finding cancer early gives you a better chance for successful treatment.

Most invasive cervical cancers are found in women who have not had regular Pap tests.

More information

You can get more information about cervical cancer on our website, www.cancer.org, or call 1-800-227-2345 to talk with one of our Cancer Information Specialists.

Thank you!