



Preventing cervical cancer

Doctors can't always explain why one person gets cervical cancer and another doesn't. But, there are things that may raise your chance of getting the disease.

Cervical cancer often grows slowly over time. Thanks to the use of Pap tests (or Pap smears), fewer women die from the disease. Getting exams and Pap tests on a regular basis can help prevent cervical cancer. The tests can find abnormal changes in the cervix so you can get it treated before cancer grows. A Pap test should be done every two to three years, along with a pelvic exam, starting no more than three years after you begin having sex or no later than age 21.

Am I at risk?

There are some risk factors for the disease you can't avoid, but there are others that you can.

- **Cervical infection with human papillomavirus (HPV):** This is the main risk factor for cervical cancer. There are different types of HPV. Many are passed from one person to another through sex. High risk HPV's can infect the cervix and cause cancer.
- **Sexual history:** Women who have sex at a young age or those who have had many sexual partners have a higher risk of HPV infection and developing cervical cancer. Using condoms may lower the chances of getting HPV and some HPV related diseases.
- **Smoking:** Cigarette smoking creates a higher risk for cervical cancer.
- **Diet:** A healthy diet may lower the chance for some cancers.

The cervix is the lower, thin part of a woman's uterus (womb). It connects the uterus with the vagina.

Talk to your doctor about ways you could lower your risk of cervical cancer.

Source: National Cancer Institute U.S. National Institutes of Health, cancer.gov.



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