



Cervical cancer

Symptoms, risks, and prevention

What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that begins in the cervix- the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina. Cervical cancer is highly preventable due to screening tests and a vaccine to prevent human papillomavirus (HPV). If found early, cervical cancer is highly treatable. Cervical cancer may not have any noticeable signs or symptoms, but sometimes cervical cancer may cause:

- Vaginal bleeding after intercourse, between periods or after menopause
- Unusual vaginal discharge
- Pelvic pain
- Pain during sexual intercourse

Risks factors of cervical cancer

- Smoking
- Having HIV or another condition that weakens your immune system
- Using birth control pills for five years or more
- Having given birth to three or more children
- Having many sexual partners

Preventing cervical cancer

Preventative testing

The Pap test (Pap smear) and the HPV test can help prevent cervical cancer. The Pap test looks for abnormal cells of the cervix that may become cervical cancer if left untreated. Women should start getting a Pap test at age 21 and continue having them every 3 years if test results remain normal. The

HPV test looks for the virus that causes abnormal cell changes. HPV tests are not recommended until a woman reaches the age of 30. Women with negative HPV test can generally repeat testing every 5 years instead of every 3 years.

HPV vaccine

The HPV vaccine protects against the types of HPV that commonly cause cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers. It is recommended for preteens (boys and girls) aged 11 to 12 years, but may be given as early as age 9 and until age 26. Even women who have had the vaccine need to have regular pap tests to screen for cervical cancer.

Other preventative measures

- Don't smoke
- Use condoms during sex
- Limit the number of sexual partners

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Want to learn more?

Make an appointment with your Everside provider today.

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