

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and Cervical Cancer

Information about the virus, cervical cancer, and vaccine

What is HPV?

The human papillomavirus or HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs). HPV is so common that nearly 85% of sexually active adults, regardless of birth-assigned sex or gender identity, will have at least one HPV infection at some point in their lives.¹

What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is a cancer of the cervix. The cervix is located at the lowest part of the uterus. A persistent or long-term infection of certain high-risk HPV types is the primary cause of cervical cancer. When found early, or in the pre-cancer stage, treatment can be successful. Cervical cancer is highly preventable with vaccination and regular screening.

How does HPV spread?

HPV is spread by skin-to-skin contact, usually through sexual contact. It is most commonly spread during vaginal or anal sex. HPV can also be spread through oral sex. A person with HPV can pass the infection to someone else even when there are no signs or symptoms.²

How do people know if they have an HPV infection?

During cervical cancer screening healthcare providers use an HPV test detect high-risk

HPV. Most HPV infections have no signs or symptoms and are cleared by the body's immune system. However, some individuals may develop genital warts, small flesh-colored bumps that can be treated by a healthcare provider.

What are the cervical cancer screening options?

Medical guidelines offer different ways to screen depending on a person age.³ Screening options should be discussed with your healthcare provider to determine which option is best.

How can people reduce their risk of an HPV infection?

Routine cervical cancer screening is one of the most important steps to reduce risk. The CDC also recommends vaccination for teens and young adults between the ages of 11 and 26.³ The vaccine is approved for adults up to age 45.³ However, even if you have been vaccinated, screening is still important since the vaccine does not protect against all types of high-risk HPV. A person may also lower their risk by not smoking, using condoms during sex, and limiting their number of sexual partners.

SCREENING OPTIONS

Ages 21 - 29	Pap Test
Ages 25 - 65	HPV Primary Screening the use of an HPV test first, followed by other test if needed
Ages 30 - 65	Co-testing Pap test and HPV test

1. CDC: Reasons to Get HPV Vaccine. <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/vaccine/six-reasons.html>. Accessed October 3, 2022.

2. CDC: HPV Fact Sheet. <https://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm>. Accessed October 3, 2022.

3. ACOG Updated Cervical Cancer Screening Guidelines. Practice Advisory. April 2021. <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2021/04/updated-cervical-cancer-screening-guidelines>. Accessed October 3, 2022.

4. Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination: What Everyone Should Know. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/public/index.html>. Accessed October 3, 2022.

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