

January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

What is Cervical Cancer?

Cancer starts when cells in the body begin to grow out of control. Cervical cancer starts in the cells lining the cervix -- the lower part of the uterus. Cervical cancer can often be found early, and sometimes even prevented entirely, by having regular Pap tests¹. Certain types of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) can cause health problems including genital warts and cancers. Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States². Some health effects caused by HPV can be prevented by the HPV vaccines.

Assess Your Risk

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Assess Your Risk for Cervical Cancer

Do you know your risk for cervical cancer?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- Have you ever been infected by **HPV**?
- Have you or your partner had sex with more than one person?
- Do you eat **less than 2 cups** of fruits and vegetables most days?
- Are you **over-weight**?
- Do you use oral contraceptives?
- Have you had **three or more full-term pregnancies**? Or were you younger than 17 the first time you gave birth?
- Does your family have a history of cervical cancer?

The Good News:
While your risk increases with every checked response, it doesn't mean you're destined for cervical cancer. Through regular Pap and HPV tests your doctor can find and remove abnormal cells before they develop into cancer.

* Reduce risk factors that you can control, and schedule your women's wellness exam today.

Reduce Risk for Yourself and Loved Ones

1. **Screen Regularly.** Women should start their pap test at age 21. At age 30, women should receive HPV-Testing and a Pap. If you have questions regarding the test, talk to your health care provider.
2. **Vaccinate Early.** Girls can be vaccinated to protect themselves from strains of HPV that could cause cancer of the cervix as early as the age of 11. Boys can also be vaccinated to protect themselves for oral and penile cancers. Vaccinating early can build a stronger immune response against HPV-strains that cause cancer.
3. **Discuss Your Family History.** Talk with your family about cancer. Cervical cancer may run in some families³. If your mother or sister had cervical cancer, your chances of developing the disease are higher than if no one in the family had it. Some researchers suspect some families have an inherited condition that makes some women less able to fight off HPV infection than others.

If you find yourself at risk, take steps to reduce your risk. You could start by taking a walk once a week, increase your intake of fruits and vegetables, or sitting with a loved one to talk about their history of cancer.

To receive cervical cancer health education resources please contact the BCCCP Coordinator, Brittney Sala at Brittney.Wooten@dhhs.nc.gov.

¹ American Cancer Society: Cervical Cancer

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention