

Talking about Cervical Cancer Prevention



It's Your Health.

*Don't be afraid to talk to your
healthcare provider about
how you can prevent cervical cancer.*

ASK QUESTIONS

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT HPV?

WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

WHEN SHOULD I GET TESTED?

I HAVE HPV; WHAT NOW?



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ASK

Ask Questions

It's your health. Don't be afraid to talk to your healthcare provider about how you can prevent cervical cancer.

This booklet provides basic information about steps women and preteens with their parents can take to protect their cervical health. It also answers some questions that women and the parents of young girls may have, such as:

This booklet is just a start. Ask your healthcare provider these questions to find out more.

You *can* prevent cervical cancer.

Vaccinate early. Pap test regularly. HPV test when recommended.



QUESTIONS

What should I know about HPV?

Should I get vaccinated? What about my daughter?

When should I have my Pap test and how often?

What do my results mean?

Do I need an HPV test?

I found out I have HPV; what now?

WHAT

What should I know about HPV?

Cervical cancer is caused by HPV [human papillomavirus] a common group of viruses that infect the skin.

Genital HPV is so common, most sexually active people will have it at some point in their lives. ¹

Over 6 million people get genital HPV each year, though most people have no visible symptoms and don't know they are infected.²



Almost 75% of these new infections are in 15-24 year-olds. ³

Vaccination against HPV makes it much less likely that a woman will develop cervical cancer. ⁴

HPV infection is usually harmless and the body often clears it in a short amount of time. ⁵

What else should I know?

Some HPV types can cause genital warts. These are known as “low risk” types because they rarely cause cancers.

Other types of genital HPV, called “high risk” types, can last for many years and cause changes in the cells of the cervix. These cell changes may lead to cancer if they aren’t found and treated.

Your healthcare provider can detect changes in the cells of your cervix before cancer develops by doing regular Pap tests.



For women over age 30, your healthcare provider may also do an HPV test along with your Pap test.

Even when cancer cells are found, with early diagnosis cervical cancer can be treated and cured.

SHOULD

Should I get vaccinated? What about my daughter?

Vaccination against HPV makes it much less likely that a woman will develop cervical cancer later in life, or have to treat cervical cell changes that might occur from HPV infection. ⁶

One HPV vaccine is currently on the market. It is approved for females ages 9-26. Other HPV vaccines are in development.

The vaccines have shown to be safe and effective in studies of thousands of girls and young women. The most common side effect is irritation and redness at the site of injection. ⁷

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends



that the vaccine be given routinely to all females ages 11-12 with “catch up” vaccination for those ages 13-26. ⁸

The vaccine protects best in females who don’t have any type of HPV, so it’s most effective for girls or young women who receive it *before* becoming sexually active.

Research shows that women who already have been exposed to one or more types of HPV can still get some protection by receiving HPV vaccinations. ⁹

HPV vaccines do not protect against all HPV types that may lead to cervical cancer, so women should continue having Pap tests even after vaccination for HPV.

WHAT

What about males and women over age 26?

Currently, HPV vaccines are only approved for females ages 9-26, but eventually the FDA may approve the vaccine for males and women over age 26. Research is ongoing to see how well these vaccines might work in preventing HPV infection and diseases in men and in women older than 26. Research to date indicates both groups tolerate HPV vaccines well and do respond to them, and studies have shown the vaccines are effective in older women.¹⁰



Vaccine Coverage

Most insurance plans cover HPV vaccination for females in the 9-26 age group.

The vaccine is also included in the federal government's Vaccines for Children program, which provides free vaccines for children who are uninsured, underinsured, Medicaid recipients, Native Americans, and/or Alaska natives.

HPV vaccines are also available free of charge to those who qualify though many state health departments.

WHEN

When should I have my Pap test and how often?

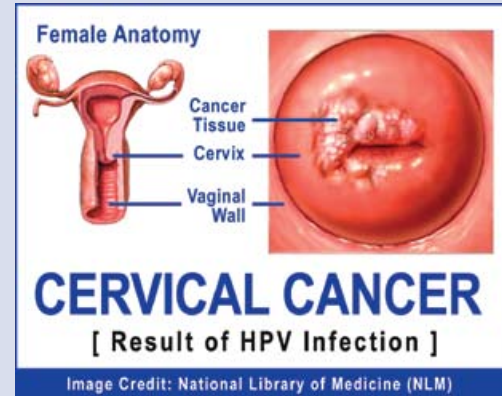
The American Cancer Society recommends that women begin Pap tests within three years after first having vaginal intercourse, but no later than age 21. ¹¹

Ask your healthcare provider how often you should have a Pap test based on your personal circumstances.



WHAT

What do my results mean?



Ask your provider to explain your Pap test results and to discuss the follow up that's appropriate for you. If the Pap test is abnormal, this may involve repeating the Pap test or, if it's unclear what's causing the results to be abnormal, an HPV test might be recommended.

HPV TEST

What is an HPV test?

The HPV DNA test detects if you have HPV or not, and will also tell your healthcare provider whether the virus is “high-risk” or “low-risk.” Your provider may order an HPV test in addition to a Pap test in the following situations:

1. as a follow up to unclear Pap test results with women over age 20 or
2. at the same time as your Pap test in women over age 30.



Do I need an HPV test?

If you are under 30, asking for an HPV test just to know your status will tell you and your healthcare provider very little. This is because HPV infection is so common in young women. In most cases it will clear from your body on its own and no abnormal cell changes will have occurred.

WHAT

I have HPV; what now?

If you have HPV, keep in mind that most sexually active individuals have HPV at some point, even though most are unaware that they have it.

An HPV diagnosis does not reflect on you, your character, lifestyle or choices. It just means that like most others, you've contracted a common virus that often clears itself without causing any major health issues. Having HPV has become part of being a normal, sexually active person.

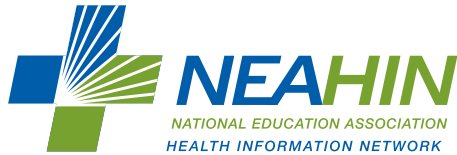


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RESOURCES

This publication was developed through a collaboration of the NEA Health Information Network and the American Social Health Association.



The **National Education Association Health Information Network** (NEA HIN) is dedicated to improving health, safety and student achievement by providing school employees with vital, effective and timely health information. A non-profit organization founded in 1987, NEA HIN develops and implements programs that promote the practice of healthy behaviors and decision-making both inside and outside of the school environment.

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