

Talking about

Cervical Cancer Prevention



Protect yourself.

Protect your daughter.

*Talk to your healthcare provider about
how you can prevent cervical cancer.*

I HAVE HPV; WHAT NOW?

WHEN SHOULD I GET TESTED?

WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

ASK QUESTIONS



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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 and cervical cancer?

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 and cervical cancer?

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

Genital HPV is so common that 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

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.

HPV infection is usually harmless and the body often clears it in a short amount of time.⁴

WHAT

What else should I know?

About 10,000 women per year in the United States will develop cervical cancer, and about 500,000 women will experience serious cervical lesions that may need treatment.⁵

Vaccination against HPV makes it much less likely that a woman will develop cervical cancer and other HPV-related illnesses that can exact a major emotional, physical, and financial toll.⁶



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.⁷

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

The vaccine has been 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.⁸

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 13-26.⁹

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.¹⁰

The HPV vaccine does 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?

Males can contract both “low risk” and “high risk” types of HPV and transmit them to their partners. No HPV test is currently FDA approved for use with men. Serious health complications rarely occur for males as a result of HPV infection. The vast majority of both men and women with HPV experience no visible symptoms.

Currently, the HPV vaccine is 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 the HPV vaccine well and do respond to it, and studies have shown that the vaccine is effective in older women.¹¹



Vaccine Coverage

The HPV vaccine is included in the federal government’s Vaccines for Children program, which provides free vaccines to children and teens under 19 years of age who are either uninsured, Medicaid-eligible, Native American, and/or Alaska Native.

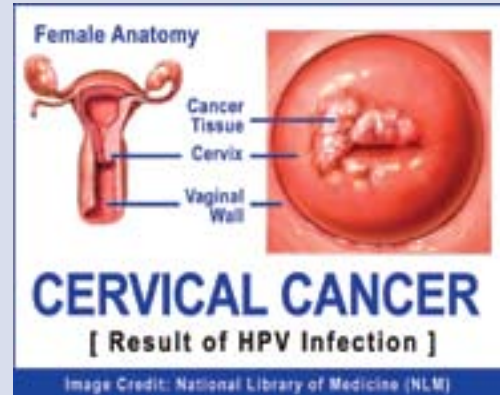
Many private insurance plans cover HPV vaccination for females in the 9-26 age group. However, if your insurance provider does not cover vaccinations, the HPV vaccine may also be available through your state or local health departments free of charge or at a discount to those who qualify.

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 21.¹²

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



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.

WHAT

What is an HPV test?

The HPV DNA test detects if you have HPV or not. It will also tell your healthcare provider whether the virus is “low risk” or “high risk.” An HPV test cannot tell you how long you may have had the virus or determine if the virus can be transmitted to a partner.

If you are over 30:

- Your provider may order an HPV test at the same time as your Pap test.
- If HPV is detected and you also have an abnormal or an unclear Pap test result, you are more likely to be experiencing persistent infection. If unchecked, this may increase the risks of cervical cancer developing.
- If HPV is detected but you have a normal Pap test result, your healthcare provider may follow you more closely and recommend repeating both tests in 12 months.



I’m under 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.

However, if you are over age 20 and you have an unclear Pap test result, your healthcare provider may order an HPV test as a follow up.

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.

It could take weeks, months, or even many years after HPV exposure before a diagnosis is made. HPV in a long-term relationship is certainly not an automatic indicator of infidelity.

Most cases of HPV will clear naturally, often within a few months, but there's no way to test and determine if HPV can be transmitted to a new partner at a given point in time.

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.

Talk to your healthcare provider about any questions or concerns you may have about HPV.

Take this booklet with you to your next appointment and use the questions inside to start a conversation.

**Protect yourself. Protect your daughter.
Ask how you can prevent cervical cancer.**

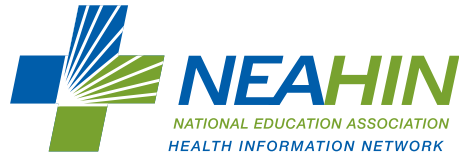


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RESOURCES

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.

NEA HIN projects address numerous public health issues, including cancer prevention and screening; indoor environmental quality and asthma; mental health and wellness; sexual and reproductive health; parent-child communication; physical activity, nutrition, and obesity prevention; and school and community safety, including Internet safety.

For more information about NEA HIN, visit www.neahin.org.



Since 1914, the American Social Health Association (ASHA) has been dedicated to improving the health of individuals, families, and communities, with a focus on preventing sexually transmitted infections [STIs] and their harmful consequences.

ASHA has pursued its mission through education, communication, advocacy and policy analysis activities. These are designed to heighten public, patient, provider, policymaker and media awareness of STI prevention, screening, diagnosis and treatment strategies.

To learn more, visit www.ASHAstd.org.

Additional resources:

The American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/std/hpv

Immunization Action Coalition
www.vaccineinformation.org