



Cervical Cancer ...

Also called **Cancer of the Cervix**

What Women Need to Know

What Should I Look For?

Cancer of the cervix often has no early signs or symptoms. That's why it is important for women to have regular tests called Pap tests. Signs usually appear when the cancer has spread in the body. You should report any of the following signs to your doctor right away:

- Any unusual discharge from the vagina (not your normal period);
- Blood spots or light bleeding, other than your normal period;
- Bleeding or pain during sex.

These signs do not mean that you have cancer. They can also be caused by something else, but you must check with your doctor to find out.

What Adds to My Risk?

Risks that add to your chance of getting cancer of the cervix include:

- Having sex at an early age;
- Having sex with more than one person;
- Having sex with a person who has had sex with more than one person;
- Being infected with the virus that causes genital warts (human papilloma virus or HPV). Not all women who have HPV infection or genital warts develop cervical cancer;
- Smoking cigarettes;

- Being infected with HIV (HIV is the virus that causes AIDS);
- Being infected with genital herpes or chlamydia infections (both are diseases that you can get through sex, called Sexually Transmitted Diseases or STDs);
- Using birth control pills for a long time;
- Having a diet low in fruits and vegetables;
- Being highly overweight;
- Having a mother or sister who has had cancer of the cervix;
- Not getting regular Pap tests.

How Can I Help Find Cancer of the Cervix Early?

- Women who are having sex or who are over 18 years old should have a pelvic exam every year.
- Women who are having sex should have an annual Pap test 3 years after the first sexual intercourse or by age 21, whichever comes first. Your doctor may advise less frequent Pap tests if you are over the age of 30 and meet certain conditions.
- The Pap test can find the early signs of cancer. Treatment can stop cancer of the cervix.
- During a pelvic exam the doctor will feel the female organs, checking their size and shape. The pelvic exam can help find diseases of the female organs, but it won't find cancer of the cervix at an early stage. To do that, the Pap test is needed.



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How to Treat Cancer of the Cervix?

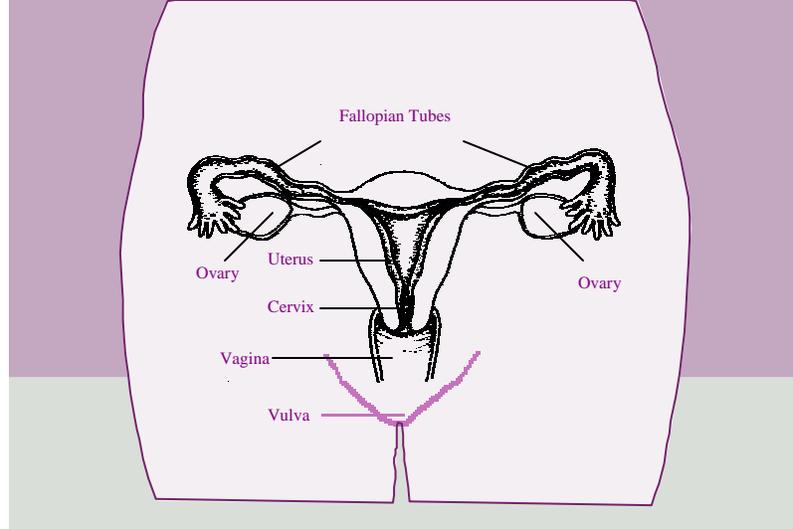
Doctors can treat cancer of the cervix in many ways. If a Pap test finds cells in the cervix that are not normal, the doctor can remove or destroy them before they turn into cancer. If cancer of the cervix is found, there are many ways of treating it. The treatment depends on how far the cancer has spread in the body.

Treatment may include one or more of the following:

- Surgery;
- Radiation;
- Chemotherapy.



All women who are having sex or who are over 18 years old should have a pelvic exam every year.



What are My Chances of Living After Getting Cancer of the Cervix?

If cancer of the cervix is found and treated early, it is very possible to cure it. As more and more women have Pap tests, doctors are finding cancer of the cervix earlier. Having a Pap test every year is the best way to find it early. But cancer of the cervix is very dangerous if it is not found.

- Nearly nine out of ten women (85%) will live five years or more if cancer is found early before it spreads outside the cervix.

Tell your doctor if you have any symptoms. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about your health or your treatment. Your doctor can give you more information about cancer of the cervix.

*Source: California Cancer Registry (CDHS/CSS)
American Cancer Society Facts and Figures 2004.*

This Fact Sheet may be downloaded at the California Department of Health Services Office of Women's Health web site:
www.dhs.ca.gov/director/owh.

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