

American Cancer Society Circle Of LifeSM : Cancer Education and Wellness

Breast & Cervical Cancer Fact Sheet



Photo courtesy of J. Morgan Edwards Photography

What is breast cancer?

- A breast cancer is a cancerous tumor that develops from cells of the breast.
- It is found mostly in women, but men can get breast cancer, too.
- Signs and symptoms of breast cancer:
 - Any change in the breast or nipple – a new lump that you haven't felt before, skin changes such as dimpling or a rash, or anything that is new or different

The Bottom Line about Breast Cancer

Nearly all breast cancer can be treated with success if found early. The best way to find breast cancer early, when it's small, is by getting regular screening tests. Starting at age 40, talk to a health care provider about the breast cancer screening plan that's right for you. If you have family members with breast cancer, talk to a provider to find out if you're at higher risk and need extra testing. You can help yourself stay healthy by being active, getting to and staying at a healthy weight, eating a healthy diet, and limiting alcohol to one drink or less per day (if you drink).

About the Cervix

The cervix is the lower part of the uterus (womb). The cervix makes up the top part of the vagina or birth canal.

What is cervical cancer?

- Cervical cancer begins in the cells of the cervix.
- Cervical cancer forms slowly, with a change from normal cells to abnormal/pre-cancer cells then to cancerous cells. These changes take a number of years.
- Signs and symptoms of cervical cancer:
 - Abnormal vaginal bleeding, unusual discharge, and/or pain during intercourse

The Bottom Line about Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer can be prevented; it can be found early; and it can be treated successfully when found early. The most proven way to prevent cervical cancer and to find cervical pre-cancers (before they become a cancer) is to have Pap tests every 3 years starting at age 21. Starting at age 30, women can get Pap and human papilloma virus (HPV) testing together every 5 years. (If HPV testing isn't available, Pap tests alone should still be done every 3 years.) Smoking raises a woman's risk of cervical cancer. All women can reduce their risk of cervical cancer by not smoking. Girls and young women can get HPV vaccines to prevent the HPV infections that cause about 70% of the cervical cancers. Because the vaccine can't prevent all HPV infections, they'll still need regular Pap tests starting at 21.

If you would like more information about breast or cervical cancer, please visit cancer.org or call 1-800-227-2345.

