

Circle Of LifeSM: Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities



American Cancer Society Circle Of LifeSM
Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

Wellness Along the Cancer Journey:
Cancer Types
Revised October 2015
Chapter 3: Cervical Cancer

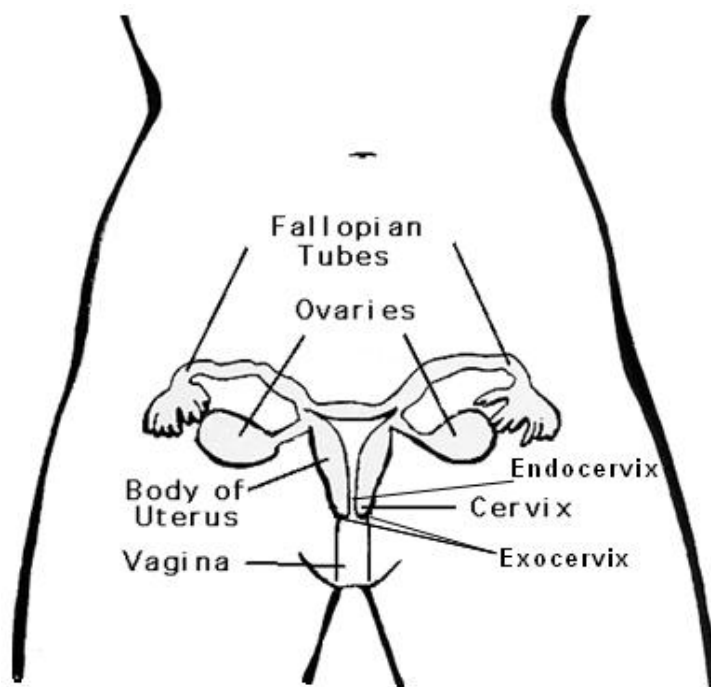


Cervical Cancer

Group Discussion		True	False	Not Sure
1.	Cervical cancer forms very rapidly.			
2.	Smoking is a risk factor for cervical cancer.			
3.	After getting the HPV vaccine, Pap tests are no longer needed.			

Even though less cervical cancer is found in American Indian and Alaska Native women, they have a higher death rate from cervical cancer than white women (Becker, 2008). Cervical cancer is one of the few cancers that can be prevented. It is important to learn about cervical cancer and the risk factors, to get regular cancer screening, and to adopt healthy ways of eating and exercising.

Cancer of the cervix (cervical cancer) begins in the lining of the cervix – the part of a woman’s body that connects the uterus to the vagina.



Cervical cancer forms slowly, starting with a change from normal cells to abnormal or pre-cancer cells and then to cancer. Often these changes in cells are referred to as dysplasia. For some women, the dysplasia may go away without any

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treatment. But, more often, the dysplasia needs to be treated to keep from becoming cancer.

Human Papilloma Virus

HPV is a group of more than 100 types of viruses. Some HPV types cause genital warts or skin warts, and other types cause cervical cancer. They can cause cancer of the cervix, vagina, and vulva (the outside parts around the vagina) in women. They can also cause cancer of the mouth, throat, and anus in men and women. HPV can cause cancer of the penis in men. HPV is passed from one person to another by direct skin contact, often during sex. Not using a condom increases the risk of getting HPV.

Many women have HPV, but in most cases the body fights off the virus and it goes away without any treatment. But sometimes, the infection will not go away and can cause cervical cancer and other types of cancer in men and in women.

Recent advances have led to vaccines that can prevent infection with the types of HPV that are known to cause 70% of cervical cancers. This vaccine is a series of 3 injections (shots) that are given over 6 months. It can be given to girls and boys between the ages of 9 and 18. They are usually given by age 12 because they work only if they are given before a person is exposed to HPV through sex. But even women who have the vaccine will need to have Pap tests later in life. There are still some cancers that the HPV vaccines cannot prevent. Pap tests will be needed to find these cancers and pre-cancers early.

Risk Factors

A risk factor is anything that affects a person’s chance of getting a disease such as cancer. Different cancers have different risk factors. But risk factors don't tell us everything. Many people with one or more risk factors never get cancer, while others with cancer may have had no known risk factors.

Risk Factors Someone Cannot Change	Risk Factors Someone May be able to Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having a mother, sister, or daughter with cervical cancer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HPV infection.• HIV infection, the virus that causes AIDS.

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- Chlamydia infection, which is a bacteria that can infect the reproductive system.
 - Smoking.
 - Using birth control pills.
 - Having 3 or more full-term pregnancies.
 - Being younger than 17 at the time of a first full-term pregnancy.
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Early Detection

Cervical cancer used to be one of the most common causes of cancer death for women. But, since widespread use of the Pap test – a test that looks for abnormal cells in the cervix – the number of cervical cancer deaths has dropped. The Pap test can find pre-cancer cells that can be treated before the cells turn into cancer. It can also find cancer cells if they are present. Most cervical cancers are found in women who have not had regular Pap tests.

The American Cancer Society recommends that all women between the ages 21 and 29 should have a Pap test every 3 years. Women under age 21 should *not* be tested. Now there is also a test called the HPV test. HPV testing should *not* be used in this age group unless it is needed after an abnormal Pap test result. Women between the ages of 30 and 65 should have a Pap test plus an HPV test (called “co-testing”) every 5 years. This is the preferred approach, but it is also OK to have a Pap test alone every 3 years.

A woman who has never had cervical cancer or pre-cancer, and who has had a total hysterectomy (removal of the uterus and cervix) should stop screening. She does not need Pap tests and HPV tests.

Women over age 65 who have had regular cervical cancer testing with normal results should *not* be tested for cervical cancer. Once testing is stopped, it should not be started again. Women who have had a serious cervical cancer or pre-cancer should continue to have testing for at least 20 years after the abnormality was found.

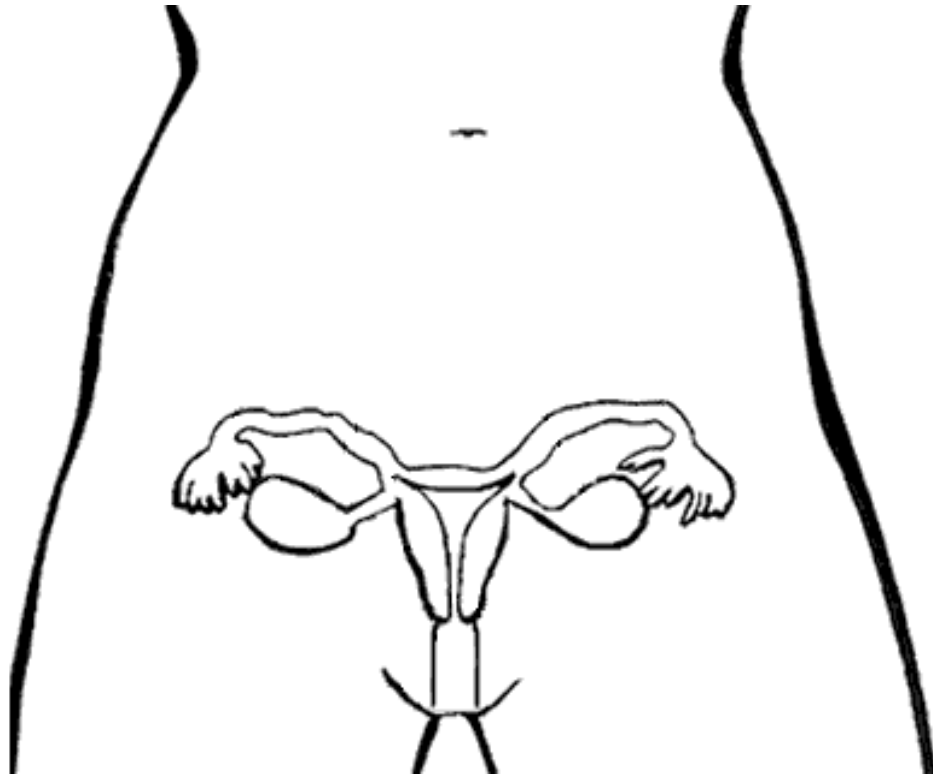
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Some women – because of their health or history – may need to have a different screening schedule for cervical cancer.

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Activity

On the picture below, identify the cervix and list one to two risk factors someone may be able to change to reduce their risk of cervical cancer.



Risk Factors Someone May be able to Change:

1. _____

2. _____

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Story of Hope



"I thought it was a killer, you know. I was always so scared of that word "cancer". I'm not even scared of that word anymore. I'm just thankful for having twenty four years of cancer free." -- Sarah S. Allman, Oglala Sioux Cervical Cancer Survivor

(Clark, R., (Producer) & Allman, S.S. (Artist), (2007). *Survivor Video Vignettes: Pre-Diagnosis Knowledge*. [Web]. Retrieved from http://natamcancer.org/vignettes/ssa_2.html)

Key Messages

- Women between ages 21 and 29 should have a Pap test every 3 years. Now there is also a test called the HPV test. HPV testing should *not* be used in this age group unless it is needed after an abnormal Pap test result.
- The Pap test can find abnormal cells before they become cancer. In this way, it can prevent cancer. The Pap test can also find cancer after it starts.
- The HPV vaccine can prevent infection with the HPV types that cause nearly 70% of cervical cancers. This vaccine can be given to girls (and boys) between the ages of 9 and 18 years.
- The HPV vaccine series cannot prevent all types of cervical cancer. Even those who have had the vaccine will need to have regular Pap tests.
- Most cervical cancers are found in women who have not had regular Pap tests.