



Cervical Cancer and HPV:

What Sisters Need to Know



CERVICAL CANCER IN OUR COMMUNITY

Cervical cancer was one of the leading cancer killers in our grandmother's time. Due to widespread screening with the Pap test, death rates from cervical cancer have fallen sharply.

But, our sisters are still being diagnosed with and dying from cervical cancer each year.

- We are diagnosed with cervical cancer at twice the rate of white women.
- We have the highest cervical cancer death rate of any group of women in the United States.

It doesn't have to be this way. **Cervical cancer is 100% preventable.** Cervical cancer screening means preventing cancer before it starts. Screening means finding cancer early so that it can be treated.

No woman has to be diagnosed with cervical cancer.

No woman has to die of cervical cancer.



PUTTING OUR HEALTH FIRST

“Disease and disasters come and go like rain, but health is like the sun that illuminates the entire village.”

African Proverb

As Black women, we often don't take basic steps to protect our health. We are so busy paying bills, cooking dinner, planning church functions and helping with homework. We find ourselves saying, “I feel fine. I am OK.”

“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (KJV)

We are wives, sisters, aunts, mothers and daughters. Often, we take care of everyone before we take care of ourselves. Have you ever stopped to think what would happen to your family if you weren't there? We can't be there for our families if we are sick or having problems with our health.

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”

John 1:2 (KJV)

“For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge.”

2 Peter 1:5 (KJV)

“Not to know is bad; not to wish to know is worse.”

African Proverb



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WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?

Cervical cancer happens when cells in the cervix grow out of control. Before cancer forms, cells that line the cervix change and become abnormal. In most cases, these abnormal cells grow slowly, over 10 to 15 years. If found early, cell changes can be treated and removed. This usually prevents cancer. When not found early, these abnormal cells can lead to cancer. The cancer cells crowd out normal cells and cause health problems.

Who can get cervical cancer?

Women, of any age, who have been sexually active can get cervical cancer.

What causes cervical cancer?

A virus called the human papillomavirus or HPV causes this cancer. Only certain types of HPV are linked to cervical cancer. These types of HPV are called “high risk” types. When you have these types, you have a **higher risk** of developing cervical cancer.



Female smokers are twice as likely to have cervical cancer compared to non-smokers. Chemicals in cigarettes have been found on the cervix of women who smoke. If you smoke, you can reduce your risk of cervical cancer by quitting.

Having HPV does not mean that you will get cervical cancer. The body can usually fight off the virus. In some women, the virus does not go away. When the virus stays in the body for a long time, cells may change and increase a woman's risk for cancer.

Where is the cervix?

The cervix is a donut-shaped doorway between the vagina and the uterus (or womb). Sperm pass through the cervix during sex. In childbirth, the cervix opens so the baby can be born.

What are other factors associated with cervical cancer?

Women **must** have HPV before they get cancer. But there are other factors that increase the risk of cervical cancer, including:

- Not getting regular screening for cervical cancer
- Smoking
- A weak immune system (for example, women with HIV or organ transplants)
- Personal history or partner's history of multiple sex partners
- History of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Having sexual intercourse at a young age

What can I do to prevent cervical cancer?

The number one thing you can do is get regular screening.

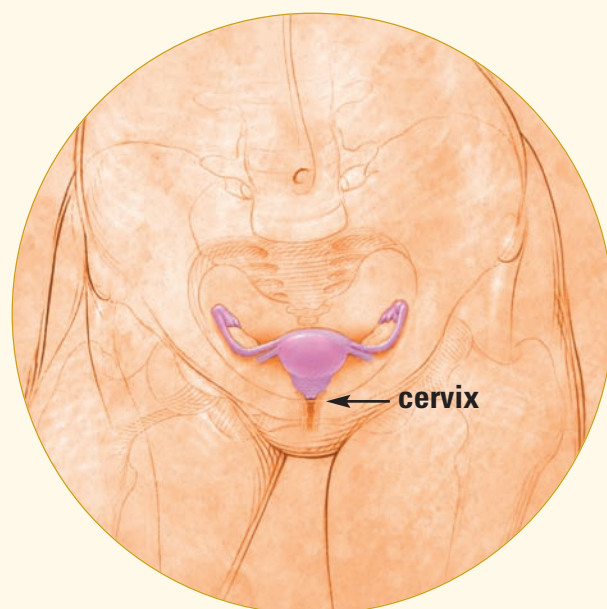
- If you are under 30 years old, Pap tests are the best way to protect yourself from cancer
- If you are 30 years old and over, getting screened with the Pap test plus an HPV test is the best way to protect yourself

HPV can “hide” in the cervix for a long time without being detected. So, you should still be screened if:

- You have had only one sexual partner for many years
- You have not been sexually active for many years

You may also be able to reduce your cervical cancer risk by:

- Quitting smoking, if you currently smoke
- Having only one partner who has had no other sexual partners
- Using condoms every time you have sex
- Delaying the age at which you engage in sexual activity for the first time





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WHAT IS HPV?

HPV (human papillomavirus) is a very common virus. There are many different types of HPV. Some types are called “high risk” because they increase the risk of cervical cancer. For cervical cancer, the term “high risk” has nothing to do with your sexual behavior or practices.

How common is HPV?

HPV is very common. Any woman or man who has been sexually active can get HPV. In fact, 8 out of 10 women have been infected with HPV by the time they reach age 50.

How do you get HPV?

HPV can be spread through vaginal sex, anal sex and possibly oral sex. You do not have to have sex to get HPV: any skin-to-skin contact in the genital area can spread HPV.

Though having more than one sex partner may increase the risk of getting HPV, **you can get the virus from just one sexual encounter.**



HPV is very common. 8 out of 10 women will get HPV by the time they reach age 50.

Does HPV have any symptoms?

No. Most of the time HPV infection is “silent” with no symptoms. That is why it is important to get regular screening.

Is there anything I can do to avoid getting HPV?

Yes. The best way to avoid getting HPV is to **abstain** from sexual contact. If you cannot abstain, you should **use condoms every time** you have sex to decrease your chances of getting HPV. Although condoms provide some defense, they cannot fully prevent infection, because they do not cover all areas of the genitals.

If I have HPV, what should I tell my partner?

You should explain that HPV is very common. More than 50 % of sexually active men and women will get HPV during their lives. People will not know from whom they got HPV or when they got it. Having HPV does not mean that you or your partner is cheating. Having HPV does not mean you are promiscuous or sleeping around.

Are there any treatments for HPV?

No. There are no medicines that you can take to treat HPV. But there are treatments for the cell changes that HPV can cause.

Can men be tested for HPV?

No. There currently is no FDA-approved HPV test for men. Although HPV infection has been linked to cancer of the penis and anus, these cancers are very rare in men.

At the ISIS Project, we care about women.

Early detection of cervical cancer and HPV saves lives. Answer our call to action and pledge to tell every woman you know:
Cervical cancer is 100% preventable.





GET SCREENED TODAY!

Cervical Cancer Screening with the Pap test and HPV test

Why is cervical cancer screening important?

Screening is the most important thing you can do to decrease your risk of getting cancer. Women who do not get screened have the greatest chance of getting cancer.

What is a Pap test?

A Pap test (also called a Pap smear) is a test to look at cells in the cervix. Cells are examined to see if they are abnormal. The Pap test does not detect the HPV virus.

What is an HPV test?

An HPV test looks for the virus that causes cervical cell changes and cancer.



If you're under 30, get screened with a Pap test. If you're 30 or over, get an HPV test along with your Pap test.

How often should I get screened?

The American Cancer Society recommends:

AGE GROUP	SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS
Under 21 years old	First Pap test within 3 years of having vaginal sex OR no later than 21 years old.
21- 29 years old	Regular Pap test every year or liquid-based Pap test every 2 years.
30 years old and over	Regular or liquid-based Pap test AND the HPV test every 3 years*.
70 years old and over	Women with 3 normal Pap tests in a row <u>and</u> no abnormal Pap test results in the last 10 years may choose to stop screening. Talk to your doctor.

*Another option for women 30 years and older with 3 normal Pap tests in a row is to get screened every 2 to 3 years with the Pap. Women should discuss these options with a doctor.

Note: Women who have had removal of the uterus and cervix may choose to stop having cervical cancer screening, unless the surgery was done as treatment for cervical cancer or pre-cancer. Women who have had a hysterectomy without removal of the cervix should continue to follow the guidelines above.

How are Pap tests and HPV tests different?

The HPV test looks for HPV in the cervix. The Pap test looks for abnormal cells in the cervix.

(These tests are not the same as a pelvic exam. A pelvic exam is when the doctor inserts his/her fingers into the vagina to examine the ovaries and uterus.)

How are the Pap test and HPV test performed?

The Pap test and HPV test can be done at the same time during your pelvic exam. The doctor inserts a tool called a speculum that allows the doctor to look at the cervix. The doctor then uses a second tool to collect a small sample of cells that are sent to the lab.

Your body is your temple. Always be sure you know your test results. Don't assume that everything is okay just because you haven't heard from your doctor's office. Call your doctor for the results, if necessary. Always make sure you are getting the follow-up and treatment your doctor has recommended.



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What do my results mean?

	You are under 30 years old	You are 30 years old or over AND Your HPV Test is Negative	You are 30 years old or over AND Your HPV Test is Positive
You have a normal Pap test	Repeat Pap test in 1-2 years, depending on your doctor's recommendation.	Repeat the Pap and HPV tests in 3 years. You should still see your doctor each year for other important exams, like a breast exam and pelvic exam.	Repeat the Pap and HPV tests in 6-12 months. If the HPV test is still positive, you will need a colposcopy*.
You have an inconclusive (ASC-US) Pap test	Your doctor will likely suggest HPV testing. Other options include: repeat the Pap test at 6 and 12 months or immediate colposcopy*.	Repeat the Pap and HPV tests in 12 months.	A colposcopy* is recommended.
You have an abnormal Pap test	It is important to understand why your cells look abnormal. Your doctor will perform a colposcopy*. Also your doctor may order additional tests.	It is important to understand why your cells look abnormal. Your doctor will perform a colposcopy*.	Your doctor will perform a colposcopy*.

Based on American College of Obstetrics & Gynecology Practice Guidelines, April and September 2005.
*Colposcopy is a procedure to look at your cervix more closely. Usually a sample of tissue is taken during the colposcopy (called a biopsy).

Should I get an HPV test if I already have been screened with the Pap test?

Yes. The Pap test is not foolproof. If you are a woman 30 or over, the HPV test with a Pap test is a way to get a better picture of your risk for cancer. The HPV test is not recommended as a screening test in women under 30.

An inconclusive result (also called ASC-US) means that cells are not clearly abnormal or normal looking. For women of all ages, an HPV test is done when the Pap test result is inconclusive.

How should I prepare for cervical cancer screening?

If you are under 30 years old, call your doctor to schedule an appointment for a Pap test. If you are 30 years old and over, tell your doctor when you schedule your Pap that you also want an HPV test.

- Do not:
- Have the test(s) during your menstrual period
 - Have vaginal sex for 48 hours before the test(s)
 - Douche for 48 hours before the test(s)
 - Use vaginal creams for 48 hours before the test(s)



Call your doctor before your appointment to ask for the HPV test. Also call your insurance company to find out if your policy covers the test.

Will my insurance pay for my Pap test and HPV test?

Private Insurance

Private insurance covers screening with the Pap test. Most insurance companies pay for HPV testing for screening in women age 30 and older. Insurance benefits vary. Call your insurance company before your doctor's visit to find out if your policy covers the HPV test.

Medicaid

Medicaid programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia cover Pap tests. Nearly all states and the District of Columbia cover HPV testing. Please check with your state Medicaid office to learn more about your state's services for cervical cancer screening.

Medicare

Medicare covers Pap tests once every 24 months. If you are of childbearing age, have had an abnormal Pap test within the last 3 years, or are at high risk for cervical cancer, Medicare will pay for a Pap test every 12 months. To learn more about your Medicare benefits, call 1-800-MEDICARE or 1-800-633-4227. Or visit www.medicare.gov.

No Insurance

All states are making cervical cancer screening more available to women without health insurance through the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP). For more information on low-cost or free screening, please visit the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/cancer or call 1-888-842-6355 and select option 7.

Resources

Learn more about HPV and cervical cancer at:

The Balm In Gilead's
The ISIS Project
1-888-225- 6243
info@theisisproject.org
www.theisisproject.org

The American Cancer Society
1-800-227-2345
www.cancer.org

The American Social Health Association
1-877- 478- 5868
www.ashastd.org

The Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
1-202-466-3825
www.arhp.org

**Join the ISIS Project.
Visit www.theisisproject.org**

The ISIS Project is an educational initiative launched by The Balm In Gilead in March 2005 to address rates of cervical cancer among Black women.

The mission of the ISIS Project is to educate Black women about HPV, cervical cancer and the need for regular screening to ensure early diagnosis and treatment.

**CERVICAL CANCER IS 100% PREVENTABLE!
GET SCREENED TODAY!**

The Balm In Gilead is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization whose mission is to improve the health status of people of the African Diaspora by building the capacity of faith communities to address life-threatening diseases, especially HIV/AIDS.

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