



Cervical Cancer

The American Cancer Society estimates approximately 11,070 new cases of cervical cancer will be diagnosed in 2008. Of these, nearly 3,870 women will die ⁽¹⁾.

The cervix is the lower part of the uterus, also called the womb. During childbirth, the cervix dilates, allowing the baby to travel from the uterus, through the cervix, to the vagina ⁽¹⁾.

Women in the early stages of cervical cancer may not show signs; however, you may see the following symptoms as the disease progresses ⁽²⁾:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge
- Painful intercourse

Cervical cancer can be detected in its early stages by using the Pap smear test. With early detection and treatment, the cervical cancer cure rate is nearly 100%. The American Cancer Society recommends the following ⁽¹⁾.

- All women should begin having a *Pap test (Pap smear)*, in addition to a pelvic

exam, approximately three years after they start having sexual intercourse; but no later than age 21.

- Pap tests should be done every 1-3 years depending on the type of test used, your age, and the test results.

Several key factors may increase the risk of developing cervical cancer; they include ⁽¹⁾:

- Chlamydia, HPV, and HIV infections
- Smoking
- Long-term use of birth control pills
- Family history of cervical cancer
- Use of diethylstilbestrol (DES)

Cervical cancer may be caused by the *human papilloma virus (HPV)*, spread through sexual intercourse. *Gardasil*, a cervical cancer vaccine, is the first vaccine manufactured to prevent cancer. This vaccine works by blocking two cancer causing types of HPV infection. *Gardasil* is recommended for girls and young women ages 9-26 ⁽²⁾.

For more information on cervical cancer, please visit the following web-links:

Cervical Cancer Information:

- [All About Cervical Cancer](#)
- [Pap Smear Interactive Tutorial](#)
- [Cervical Cancer Vaccine Information](#)

References:

1. American Cancer Society. Detailed Guide: Cervical Cancer.
2. U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health

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