



# TIP SHEET Cervical Cancer

FOR  
TEENS

## What You Should Know

The cervix is the lower narrow part of the uterus (womb) that connects to the vagina (birth canal). Cervical cancer usually affects women between the ages of 30 and 55 but it's important for teens to learn about it now.

Nearly all cervical cancers are caused by an infection with Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which can now be largely prevented by vaccination.

## What Is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

Human Papillomaviruses are a group of viruses, some of which cause genital warts (papillomas) and/or cancers of the cervix, anus, vagina, penis, throat, and other oral and head and neck cancers.

These viruses spread through sexual contact, including vaginal, oral or anal sex. Many people don't know they're infected because they don't have symptoms, but the virus still causes damage.

The HPV vaccines are only effective when given *before* infection with HPV; experts advise getting the vaccine before becoming sexually active.

## About the HPV Vaccine

- FDA-approved vaccines prevent several HPV strains most commonly associated with cervical and other cancers. These vaccines include Cervarix and Gardasil 9.
- Each HPV vaccine involves three doses. Whichever vaccine your doctor recommends, you need **all three doses** to be fully vaccinated.
- Doctors advise that all adolescents (guys, too) get vaccinated against HPV at age 11 or 12.

Only about a third of adolescent girls have received all three doses of the HPV-vaccine series. If **80%** completed the series, it would prevent an estimated **53,000** cases of cervical cancer over their lifetimes.

### DID YOU KNOW...?

- Most cervical cancers are caused by infection with a common virus, called **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)**.
- HPV infections are **very common in adolescents** (age 20 or younger).
- Although some people develop warts from an HPV infection, many don't have any symptoms. Someone can be infected and **pass the virus without knowing it**.
- You can **prevent many HPV infections by getting vaccinated** with the HPV vaccine.

# Meet the Doctors

## RISK FACTORS FOR CERVICAL CANCER

You may be at increased risk for cervical cancer if you:

- Have an HPV infection of the cervix
- Give birth to many children
- Have many sexual partners
- Have first sexual intercourse at a young age
- Smoke
- Use birth control pills for a long time (more than 5 years)
- Have a weakened immune system (from HIV or immune-suppressing drugs)

Having risk factors does not mean you will get cervical cancer. Talk to your doctor about your cancer risk.

Before cancer appears, cells on the cervix go through changes, called dysplasia, which can be detected through a screening called a Pap test.

A Pap test collects cells from the cervix's surface to examine under a microscope. You still need Pap tests even if you have the vaccine because

**Some** cervical cancers are caused by HPV strains not covered by the vaccine.



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## Take Charge

### ACT TO HELP PREVENT CERVICAL CANCER

- Get vaccinated against HPV (don't forget to get all three doses)
- Talk to your doctor about cervical cancer screening at age 21
- Don't smoke

## Learn More

[www.yroswell.com](http://www.yroswell.com)

A website designed specifically for young people who want to get involved and help create a world without cancer.

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

Honest, accurate info and advice about health, emotions and life.

[www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/cervix](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/cervix)

Cervical cancer info from the National Cancer Institute.

[www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/aya](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/aya)

Information and resources for adolescents and young adults with cancer.

