

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS OF CERVICAL CANCER?

Several risk factors increase the chances of developing cervical cancer. Women without any of these risk factors rarely develop cervical cancer. However, many women with these risks do not develop this disease. The most important risk factor is being infected by the human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV is a group of 150 viruses, and can spread from skin-to-skin contact, including through sex. Nearly all cases of cervical cancers are caused by genital HPV. Unfortunately, infection with HPV is common, but in most people the body can clear the infection by itself. Sometimes, however, the infection does not go away and becomes chronic, which can eventually cause cervical cancer. There is currently no cure for HPV infection. Having a family history of cervical cancer can also double or triple the chances of developing cervical cancer.

HOW CAN I DECREASE MY RISK FOR CERVICAL CANCER?

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable types of cancer. There are several behaviors that can reduce the risk of developing cervical cancer: getting pap tests regularly beginning at age 21, HPV tests, not smoking, using condoms during sex, and limiting the number of sexual partners. Delaying sex until you are older can also help avoid HPV because it reduces exposure to someone who has had many other partners. Cervical cancer is preventable with the HPV vaccine, with strong recommendations for pre-teen and young adult women.

Reference:

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Additional Risk Factors

- ✓ Smoking
- ✓ HIV infection
- ✓ History of Chlamydia infection
- ✓ Diets lacking sufficient fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Being overweight
- ✓ Long-term oral contraceptive use (5 or more years)
- ✓ Women who have had 3 or more full-term pregnancies
- ✓ Women under age 17 when they had their first full-term pregnancy



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