

Buena Vida!

Protecting Yourself from Cervical Cancer

3 Risk Factors
you should be aware of

How to detect cervical cancer early & prevent the disease



What you can do to learn more about cervical cancer and protect yourself

Purpose of this Booklet

Although it's true that Hispanic women are at higher risk for cervical cancer than other women, the good news is that regular tests can help protect you from this disease. Over the years, a simple exam called the Pap test has saved millions of lives.

This booklet provides some basic information about cervical cancer and your risk for the disease. It also explains the need for regular Pap tests, and how this exam can help find cervical cancer early - and even help you prevent it!

In addition, this booklet includes phone numbers and web sites where you can find more information. The phone calls are free, and information is available in both English and Spanish.

Remember, learning how to protect yourself from cervical cancer is very important. But this is only the first step. The next step – getting tested – is the most important. Make an appointment today!



Contents

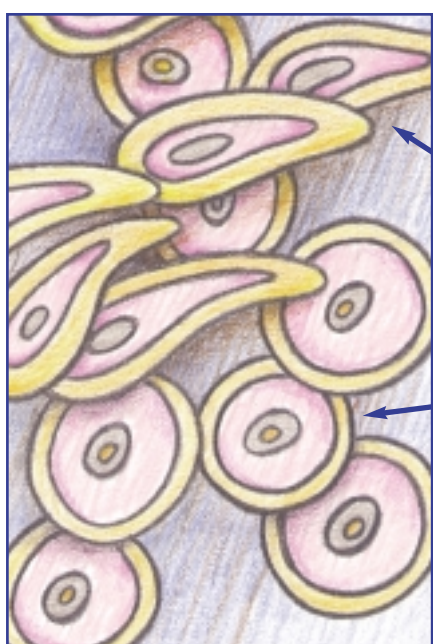
- What is cervical cancer?3
- Am I at risk?4
- Can I prevent cervical cancer?5
- How can testing help?6
- How can I be tested?7
- What if the tests show abnormal results?8
- What treatments are available?9
- Are the treatments effective?10
- What support is available?11
- National Resources12



This booklet was produced by the Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Research Center, Baylor College of Medicine through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Grant No. U57 CCU615140

What is cervical cancer?

Abnormal cells can grow and form cancerous tumors. These tumors can appear in different places in the body. For women, a common form of cancer is cervical cancer. This occurs when the disease appears in the cervix.

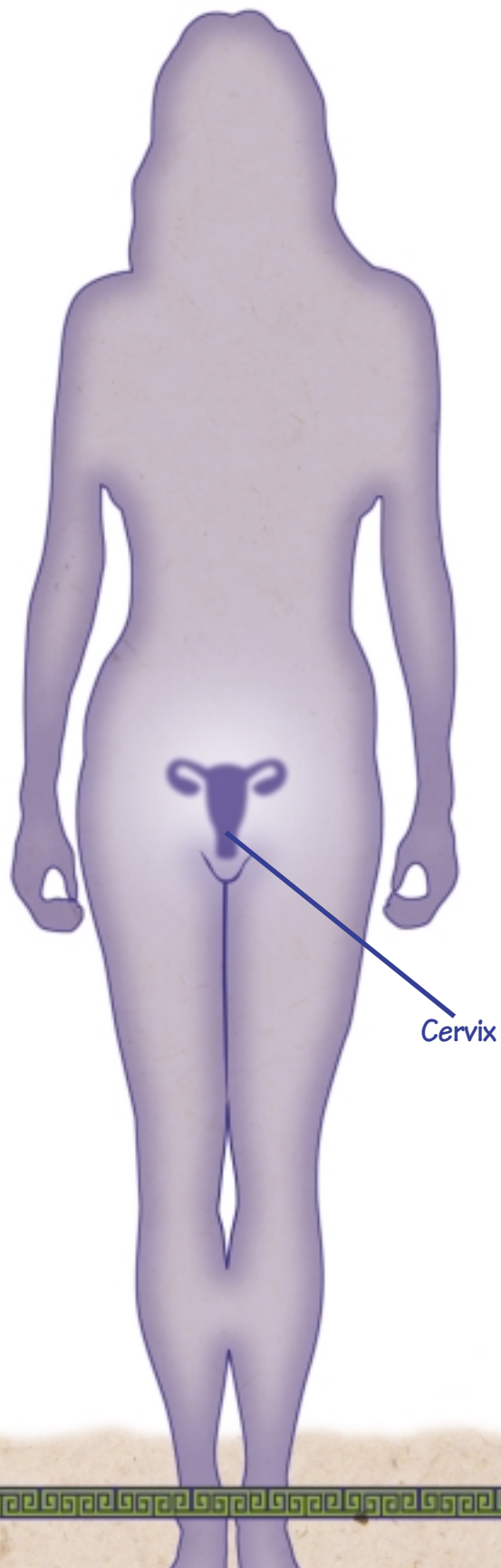


Cancer cells

Normal cells

Graphic courtesy of National Cancer Institute

When cervical cancer is in an early stage, there may be no pain or other symptoms. Tests in the doctor's office are the only way to find out if you have the disease.



Cervix

Am I at risk?

Any woman can get cervical cancer. The risk begins when females are in their teens and 20s. However, the risk is higher for some women than others.

3 risk factors you should be aware of

The risk of cervical cancer is higher for:

- 1 *Hispanic women - Cervical cancer claims the lives of Latinas twice as often as other women.*
- 2 *Women whose sexual activity begins at an early age*
- 3 *Women who have more than one sexual partner **OR** whose partners have other sexual partners*

"I have a 29-year-old friend with cervical cancer. I realize how important it is to get tested regularly, and I plan to continue getting tested the rest of my life."

Ana Urdiales, left, realizes the risk of cervical cancer, even in young women.



Can I prevent cervical cancer?

You can prevent cervical cancer if tests find early signs and you are treated before the disease develops. Regular Pap tests are the best way for your doctor to find warning signs as early as possible.

What is a Pap test?

A Pap test is a way to see if you have cervical cancer or an abnormal condition that could develop into cancer. This exam is sometimes called Pap smear or Papanicolaou.

The exam is quick and painless. And it can be done in the doctor's office or in a clinic.

The Pap test is the most effective cancer screening test available.

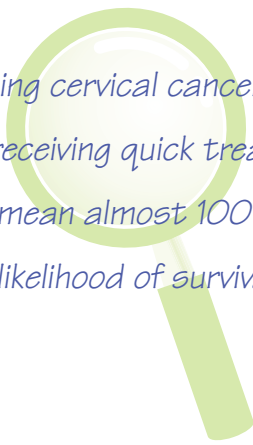
"We (women) have just recently begun to learn about cervical cancer. It would be a shame to not take advantage of the technology available for early detection."



Carmen Elizondo, shown with husband Eugenio, says her family is the most important thing in her life and the best reason to stay healthy.

How can testing help?

A Pap test can catch cervical cancer in an early stage. It can also find an abnormal condition before it develops into cancer. Almost all deaths from cervical cancer can be prevented by having regular tests and, if necessary, receiving treatment.



Finding cervical cancer early and receiving quick treatment often mean almost 100 percent likelihood of survival.

"I have an aunt who had cervical cancer. She's alive because it was detected early. That's why I get regular tests. That way, if I get cancer, chances are I'll survive it."

Irene Lopez plans to enjoy spending time with her grandchildren for years to come.



How can I be tested?

To schedule a Pap test, call your clinic or doctor's office. You can make an appointment for a time that is best for you.

For protection from cervical cancer, all women should start getting Pap tests about three years after they become sexually active or at age 21, whichever comes first.

"My children go back to school every September. I usually go in for my Pap test at that time, then I'm set for the year."



Lillian Sanchez, 50, is a research nurse who has regular Pap tests.

What if the tests show abnormal results?

A Pap test can reveal conditions that are not normal. These may be formed by cancer cells. Or they may be caused by something else. The only way to know for sure is to be tested.

Why do I need to be tested regularly?

If a tumor is starting to form, it may be too small to catch. But with regular tests, it can be found and treated early.

Always follow your doctor's directions for being tested.

"A few years ago, I developed a problem, and the doctor said I needed to be tested. My condition turned out to be nothing serious, but since then, I go for my exam regularly."

Agricola Rodriguez, seated in this photo with friend Minnie Lombano, stays active and is tested regularly.



What treatments are available?

Different treatments are available for cervical cancer. The doctor's choices depend on the stage of the disease when it is found. Treatments may range from regular examinations to removal of abnormal tissue.

If cervical cancer is present, finding it early gives doctors more choices for treating the disease as quickly and easily as possible. Also, early treatment usually means the cancer is less likely to recur.

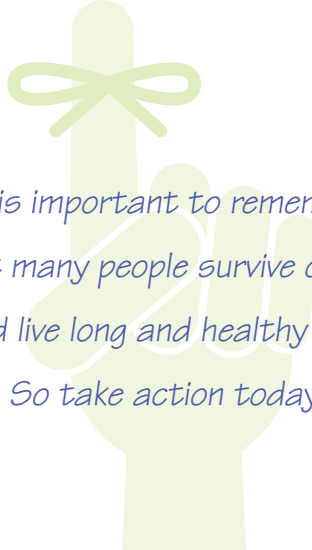
"Once, the doctor called me back to his office because the result of my Pap test was abnormal. It turned out to be nothing, but it's always better to know for sure."

As a young mother, Gloria Zapata maintains a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise, a nutritious diet and, of course, annual check-ups.



Are the treatments effective?

Treatment for cervical cancer can be very effective, especially if the disease is found early. If the cancer has grown and spread, it may require more intense treatment.



*It is important to remember
that many people survive cancer
and live long and healthy lives.
So take action today!*

“When I found out that I had cervical cancer, I wanted to do whatever it took to beat it. I did beat it, and chances are that others can too if the disease is detected early.”

Terri Zaragoza is a wife and mother of two girls and a boy.



What support is available?

There are many places to find information and support. These can help all women affected by cervical cancer, including those who:

- ▶ Have just been diagnosed
- ▶ Need treatment or are being treated
- ▶ Have completed treatment
- ▶ Are cancer survivors

For information and support services in your community, ask your doctor for names and phone numbers.

See page 12 for information about national organizations that can also help.

"It was the support from my husband that helped me get through the fear and uncertainty of possibly having cancer. Now I try to help my friends and family in similar situations."



Mrs. Gloria Ramirez, shown with husband Samuel, underwent tests to rule out the possibility of cervical cancer.

National Resource List

▶ **Cancer Information Service**

1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

www.cancer.net.nci.nih.gov

Mailing Address:

NCI Public Inquiries Office
Suite 3036A
6116 Executive Boulevard, MSC8322
Bethesda, MD 20892-8322

You can discuss your concerns with English- and Spanish-speaking staff members who are trained to answer questions and provide help. Either call the toll-free number or send written requests to the mailing address. For example, you can find information about:

- ▶ Particular forms of cancer
- ▶ Treatment choices
- ▶ Possible side effects
- ▶ Nutrition information and recipes

Information on the web site is provided in English and Spanish. As an option, you can go directly to the Spanish version at www.cancer.gov/espanol/.

▶ **American Cancer Society**

1-800-ACS-2345

www.cancer.org (Spanish text available)

Mailing Address:

1599 Clifton Road, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30329

The American Cancer Society has educational programs, offers free cancer materials and provides many services to patients and families. Call the toll-free number (English and Spanish) to find the local office nearest you.

▶ **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program**

www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp (Spanish text available)

This site offers information about cervical cancer risk factors, Pap test screening guidelines, benefits of regular testing and a state-by-state resource guide to learn more about free or low-cost Pap tests. To obtain this resource contact information on the phone, call 1-888-842-6355 (select option 7).

▶ **National Cervical Cancer Coalition**

1-800-685-5531 (for cervical cancer patients and their families)

www.nccc-online.org

Mailing Address:

16501 Sherman Way, Suite 110
Van Nuys, CA 91406

e-mail:

info@nccc-online.org

This site offers patient information, the latest research results, personal stories of cervical cancer survivors and contact information if you wish to speak on the phone with another survivor. Key elements of the site are available in Spanish text.

▶ **The National HPV & Cervical Cancer Campaign**

www.cervicalcancercampaign.org

This site offers patient information and frequently asked questions about cervical cancer: causes, testing procedures, treatments and various other issues.