

# CERVICAL HEALTH

# AWARENESS MONTH

• JANUARY •



## What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer develops slowly in the cells of the cervix, which is the lower part of the uterus. Before cancer appears, abnormal cells (dysplasia) may form and, if not treated, can turn into cancer over time. The two main types are:

- **Squamous cell carcinoma:** Most common (up to 90%), starts in the outer cervix.
- **Adenocarcinoma:** Starts in glandular cells of the inner cervix; rare types also exist.

Cervical cancer often causes no symptoms until later stages. Regular screenings can detect changes early—when treatment is most effective. According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), cervical cancer is most commonly diagnosed in women between the ages of 35 and 44, and it rarely develops in women younger than age 20. Cervical cancer often causes no symptoms until it reaches a later stage – which is why regular screenings are so important. Almost all cervical cancers are caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV), a common virus that can be passed from one person to another through sexual contact. The Pap test (or Pap smear) is one of the best ways to screen women for cervical cancer and test for HPV infection.

## Key Facts

- Most often diagnosed in women ages 35–44
- Rare in women under age 20, but can occur at any age
- Almost all cases are caused by HPV, a common virus spread through sexual contact

**Prevention is key:** The HPV vaccine is one of the most effective ways to prevent cervical cancer.

- Routine vaccination: Recommended at age 11 or 12 years (can be started as early as age 9)
- Catch-up vaccination: Recommended for everyone through age 26 years if not adequately vaccinated when younger

It is important that you talk to your provider about whether HPV vaccination is right for you or your child.

## Cervical cancer screenings

Cervical cancer is highly preventable with the HPV vaccine, regular screenings, and timely follow-up.

- **Ages 21-29:** Pap test every 3 years
- **Ages 30-65:** Choose one option (talk to your doctor):
  - » HPV test every 5 years
  - » HPV + Pap test every 5 years
  - » Pap test every 3 years
  - » Ages 65+: May stop screening if you've had regular normal results and no history of precancer

**Remember:** Everyone's health needs are different. Talk to your provider about the best screening schedule and options for your individual situation.

**Reminder! Cervical cancer screenings are covered 100% in-network under EMR's medical plans. To learn more about cervical cancer, click [HERE](#).**

## Sources

- <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/>
- <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/colon-rectal-cancer/about.html>
- <https://healthylearn.com/connerstrong/hc/cervical-health.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/hcp/recommendations.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/cervical-cancer/screening/index.html>