

Cervical Health Awareness Month

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month, a great time to learn more about the importance of cervical health. Years ago, cervical cancer was one of the most common causes of cancer death for American women. Today, that number has gone down by more than 40%, particularly due to an increase in preventive screenings, more commonly known as Pap tests.

Symptoms of cervical cancer don't traditionally present themselves until the cancer has grown and spread to surrounding tissues. If the cancer has progressed, you may notice these signs and symptoms – abnormal vaginal bleeding, increased vaginal discharge, bleeding after menopause, pain during intercourse, or pelvic pain. If you have any of these signs, see your provider. They may be caused by something else other than cancer, but seeing a provider is the only way to know. In addition, to lower your risk for cervical cancer, get screened regularly and get the HPV vaccine. Talk with your primary care provider about screenings and the frequency that is right for you.

Learn more with these activities:

No. 1: Cervical health awareness webinar

No. 2: Fact sheet + crossword

No. 3: Two truths and a lie

No. 4: Preventive health checklist

Every year about 11,500 new cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed and about 4,000 people die of this cancer. (Source: [CDC](#))



 **Questions?** Email Wellness@Medica.com

Health disparities

“Health disparities” are preventable differences in health among different social or racial groups. Health Disparities are a complex and challenging problem across the world. Social factors play the largest role in shaping the overall health of communities. For example, the ability to access healthcare, a safe living environment, racial equity, nutritious food, quality education, and supportive relationships free of discrimination are all incredibly important to your overall health.

Cancer doesn't always affect all groups of people equally. There are differences in risk among different groups of people due to differences in genetics, hormones, environmental exposure, and other factors. In addition, lack of access to health care, socioeconomic status, and cultural attitudes/behaviors can be barriers to screening for cervical cancer and treatment.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#):

- Hispanic women have the highest rates of developing cervical cancer.
- Black women have the highest rates of dying from cervical cancer.

Learn more:

- Review the [CDC's Cervical Cancer](#) site with information from cervical cancer basics to assorted resources for anyone facing this disease.
- If you know someone who doesn't have access to breast and cervical cancer screening services, this program might be able to help: the CDC [National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program](#) provides cancer screening to low-income, uninsured, or underinsured women.
- Visit [CancerCare](#) for a list of financial assistance organizations and programs if you're struggling to afford cervical cancer treatment.

Activity 1: Cervical health awareness webinar

Watch this webinar for a high-level overview of cervical cancer including basic female anatomy, screening recommendations and frequency, what abnormal results mean, signs and symptoms, Human Papillomavirus (HPV), and prevention strategies.

[Watch here](#)

Activity 2: Cervical cancer fact sheet + crossword

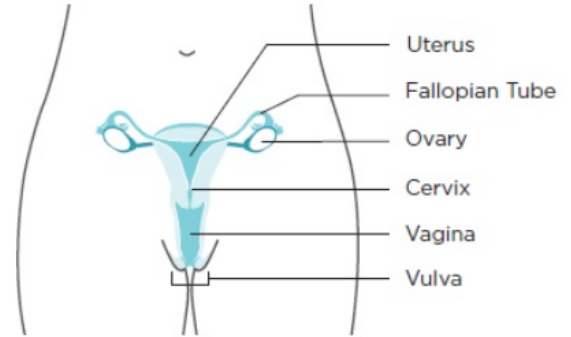
Cervical cancer fact sheet

Read through the facts below and use this information to complete the crossword puzzle on the next page.

Cervical cancer forms slowly and often has no signs or symptoms. Around 13,000 women in the U.S. are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year.

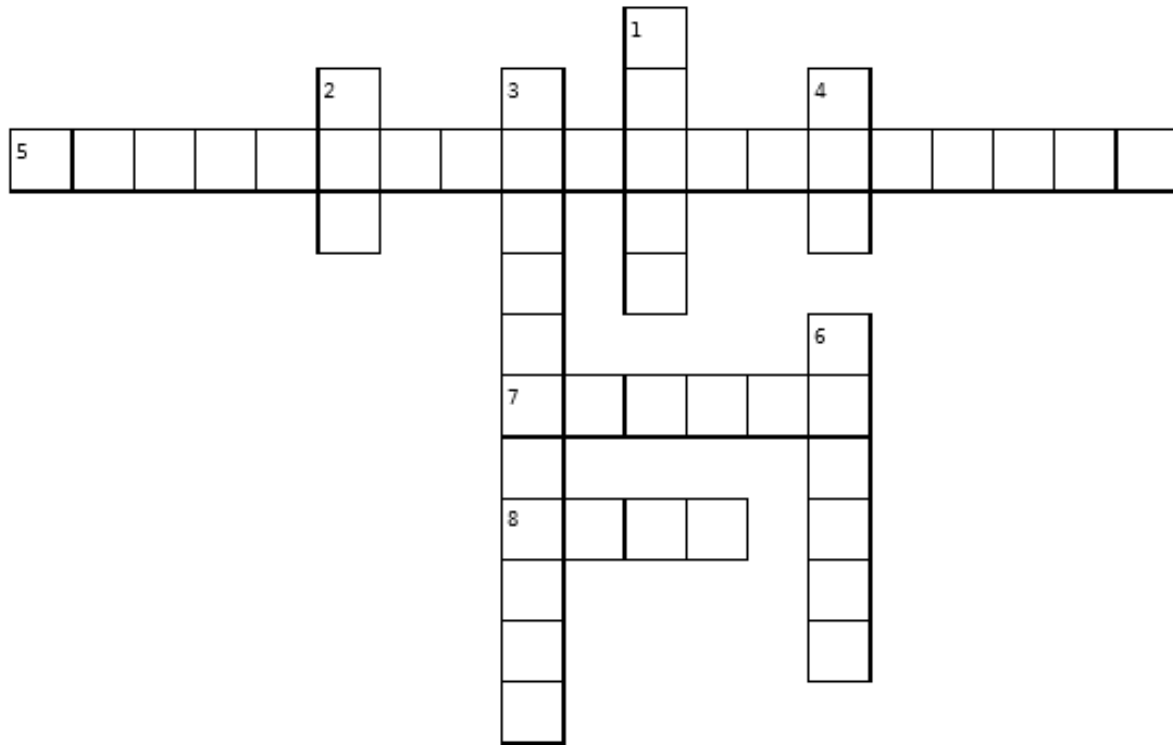
- The cervix connects the vagina to the upper part of the uterus.
- The most important thing you can do to help prevent cervical cancer is to have regular screening tests.
- There are two screening tests:
 1. Pap test/smear: This test can help you prevent cancer in the first place, or catch it early.
 - A Pap test looks for abnormal or precancerous cells on the cervix that may cause cervical cancer if not treated.
 - Pap tests have dramatically decreased the number of cervical cancer deaths in the U.S.
 2. HPV (Human Papillomavirus) test
 - Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) that affects males and females. Infection with certain strains of HPV can cause cervical cancer when transmitted to women. Condoms can prevent HPV transmission.
 - The HPV test checks for high-risk strains of the HPV virus that can cause cervical cancer, and it can be done at the same time as a Pap test.
- Ask your doctor if you are eligible to receive the HPV vaccine.

The HPV vaccine protects against HPV infection and is the only vaccine that can prevent cancer!
The HPV vaccine is available to men and women ages nine through 26. It is most effective when given before becoming sexually active.
- Other risk factors for cervical cancer are smoking, family history, and long-term use of oral contraceptives.
- Talk with your provider about getting regular cervical screening tests based on your age and health history.



This diagram shows different parts of a woman's reproductive system.

Cervical cancer crossword puzzle



Down:

1. The Pap test screens for abnormal or precancerous _____ on the cervix.
2. _____ is the most common sexually transmitted infection.
3. Having certain strains of HPV is one of the _____ for cervical cancer. (2 words)
4. This test has helped with decreasing the number of female deaths due to cervical cancer in the U.S.
6. The cervix is only part of a _____'s anatomy.

Across:

5. What does HPV stand for?
7. Who can spread HPV?
8. True or False: There is a vaccine for certain strains of HPV that can increase a female's risk for cervical cancer.

Activity 3: Two truths and a lie

Two Truths and a Lie is a game where you try to guess which two facts are true and which one is a lie. The information may or may not have been addressed in this packet, so just guess and learn something new! The answers are listed at the bottom of the last page.



1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. HPV is an STI.b. Cervical cancer is contagious.c. HPV is contagious.
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. A Pap test collects cells from the cervix and is sent to the lab for examination.b. An abnormal Pap test result does <u>not</u> mean you have cervical cancer.c. An abnormal Pap test result means that you have cervical cancer.
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Women don't need to worry about cervical cancer until they're 35 years old.b. HPV infections can occur in all ages.c. Women have been diagnosed with cervical cancer in their 20s.
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. There are more than 100 strains of HPV, but only a few increase a woman's risk for cervical cancer.b. The HPV vaccine can cause cervical cancer in some people.c. HPV is transmitted through sexual contact and can cause cancer.
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Males and females both have a cervix.b. Cervical cancer affects the cervix, which is part of the reproductive system.c. Screening tests help save lives.

Activity 4: Preventive health checklist

Review this checklist and complete the items for yourself or someone you care about as their advocate. If you have already completed an item, check the box. Participation is based on reviewing the checklist and preparing, not necessarily completing the items this month.

- Establish care with a primary doctor if you don't already have one. [Search the network*](#) if you need assistance finding a primary doctor.
- Check if you are due for any preventive health items (e.g., screenings, tests, vaccines)
- Be prepared to discuss the following about cervical health at your appointment (or the appointment of a loved one):
 - HPV vaccine benefits and qualifications
 - Family history
 - Risk factors (e.g., smoking, sexual behaviors)
- Set up an account for your electronic health record if you haven't done so already.
- Check if you have any overdue preventive health items in your electronic health record.

*Members only.

Answer Key: Two Truths and A Lie

1. B is a lie. This is false. Cervical cancer is not contagious, HPV is contagious. HPV has multiple strains that if contracted, can increase your risk for cervical cancer.
2. C is a lie. Having abnormal Pap results does not mean you have cancer. Further testing after an abnormal Pap determines if there is cancer.
3. A is a lie. Cervical cancer has occurred for women in early years of life.
4. B is a lie. The HPV vaccine does not cause cervical cancer.
5. A is a lie. Only females have a cervix if it has not been removed.

Answer Key: Crossword Puzzle

Down

- 1 is Cells
- 2 is HPV
- 3 is Risk Factors
- 4 is Pap
- 6 is Female

Across

- 5 is Human Papillomavirus
- 7 is Anyone
- 8 is True