

## JANUARY PREVENTIVE HEALTH TOOLKIT

# Women's Health

Women face different health concerns that need specialized care but, these concerns have often been overlooked, leading to a gap in healthcare (Source: [WEF](#)). Thankfully, efforts to close this gap are gaining momentum. January's preventative health toolkit aims to narrow the gap even further by giving valuable information about women's health concerns, like menopause, and cervical cancer. By staying informed, women can manage their health journeys with confidence.

Learn more with the activities in this toolkit:

- **Cervical Cancer Awareness Month**
- **Preventative health checklist**

**Life expectancy for the average woman is five years longer than that of the average man, according to recent data from the CDC.**

(Source: [CDC](#))



### ? Questions?

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# Health disparities

Health disparities are preventable differences in health between groups of people due to race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, education, economic status, where they live, disability, etc. Health disparities are a complicated and challenging problem around the world. The health of a community is shaped mostly by social factors. For example, having access to healthcare, a safe area to live, racial equity, healthy food, good education, and supportive relationships free of discrimination are all very important to overall health.

Over the last 200 years, men and women have started to live longer. In 1800 the average person was only expected to live for 30 years, but by 2020, the average person will live for 78 years. Even with these advances, women still spend more of their lives in poor health.

## Did you know?

- The women's health gap amounts to 75 million years of life lost due to poor health or early death each year. Closing the gap would give women an extra seven days a year, or an average of 500 days over a lifetime. (Source: [WEF](#))
- Women often struggle to get the medical care they need, even though they are more likely than men to have health insurance. (Source: [NIH](#))
- Historically, women were excluded from many medical research studies, which has led to worse health outcomes for them today. (Source: [AAMC](#))

For more information, please visit:

- [6 conditions that highlight the women's health gap \(World Economic Forum\)](#)
- [Why we know so little about women's health \(AAMC\)](#)
- [What to know about gender bias in healthcare \(Medical News Today\)](#)

# Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. Cervical cancer used to be the most common cause of cancer death for American women. Today, that number has gone down by more than 40% because of preventive screenings known as Pap tests.

Cervical cancer grows slowly and often has no signs or symptoms. About 11,500 women in the US are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year (Source: [CDC](#)). The good news is that cervical cancer is one of the most preventable and treatable types of cancer. The best way to help prevent cervical cancer is to have regular screening tests.



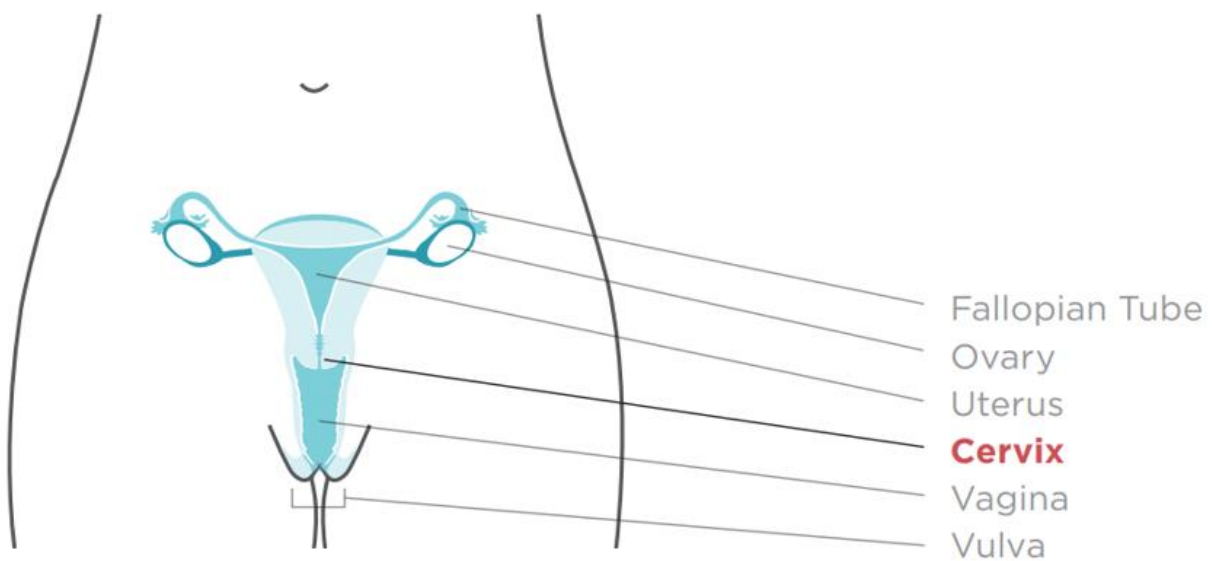
There are two types of screening tests:

- **Pap test/smear:** This test can help you prevent cervical cancer in the first place, or catch it early. A Pap test looks for abnormal cells on the cervix that could become cervical cancer if not treated. Pap tests have greatly decreased the number of cervical cancer deaths in the U.S.
- **HPV (Human Papillomavirus) test:** HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) for both men and women. Some types of HPV can cause cervical cancer in women, but HPV transmission can be prevented with the use of condoms. The HPV test checks for the types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer and can be done at the same time as a Pap test.

Ask your doctor if you should get the HPV vaccine. The HPV vaccine protects against HPV infection and is the only vaccine that can prevent cancer. It's available for men and women ages 9 to 26 and works best when given before someone becomes sexually active.

Other risks for cervical cancer include smoking, a family history of the disease, and long-term use of birth control pills. Talk to your doctor about when to get regular cervical screening tests based on your age and medical history.

### Female reproductive system



# 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 completing the items this month.

- Establish care with a primary doctor if you don't already have one. [Search the network](#)\* if you need help finding a primary doctor.
- Set up an account for your electronic health record if you haven't already.
- Check if you are due for any preventive health items (e.g., screenings, tests, vaccines).
- Schedule a well-women visit with your doctor. This visit will include the following:
  - Talking about health habits or risk factors and family history
  - A physical exam
  - Recommended screenings, tests, and vaccines
- Know your family health history
- Make a list of questions for your doctor. Now is a good time to ask your doctor about the following:
  - Birth control, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or getting pregnant
    - How can I protect myself from HIV and other STIs?
    - Which form of birth control is right for me?
  - Menopause
    - What symptoms of menopause might I develop?
    - What are the potential causes of my current symptoms?
    - What steps can I take to manage my symptoms?
    - Are there other steps I can take to manage menopause and stay healthy as I get older?
  - Anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues
    - Where can I get help for a mental health issue?
  - Healthy eating and being more active
- Follow up with your doctor, any recommended specialists, or for screenings (if needed).
- Take steps to stay healthy all year
  - Be active
  - Eat healthy
  - Manage stress
  - Don't smoke
  - Get enough sleep

*\*Members only.*

## Resources

[Women's Health \(ACOG\)](#)

[Office on Women's Health \(OASH\)](#)

[WebMD Menopause Resource Center](#)

[The Menopause Society](#)

[Cervical Cancer \(CDC\)](#)

[National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program \(CDC\)](#)