

What Women Should Know about Cervical Cancer

Receiving regular health screenings is an important part of maintaining or achieving good health. Health screenings can prevent cervical cancer, which is a disease in which cells in the cervix begin to grow out of control. Any woman can be at risk for cervical cancer. Cervical cancer can be prevented or caught early by receiving a regular Pap test, which checks for precancers or cell changes in the cervix. The Healthy Texas Women program provides these cervical cancer screenings and diagnostic services.

What are the risk factors?

There are certain health or lifestyle factors that can put you at higher risk for cervical cancer. It is important to be aware of these factors, which can include having Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Almost all cervical cancers are caused by HPV. Other factors can increase your risk for cervical cancer including:

- Smoking
- Having Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)
- Having a weaker immune system



What are the symptoms?

In the early stages of cervical cancer, women may not have any symptoms. This is why it is so important to get routine cervical cancer screenings. In the advanced stages of cervical cancer, women may experience the following symptoms:

- Bleeding or discharge from the vagina that is not normal such as bleeding or discharge between periods or after menopause
- Pain during sex



What can you do?

If you think you have any of the risk factors or symptoms for cervical cancer, you should talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about getting a Pap test to check for cervical cancer. Women ages 21-65 years old should get a Pap test. You can talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about how often you should get screened for cervical cancer.

Here are some simple steps you could take to help improve your health and prevent cervical cancer:

- **Avoid exposure to HPV.** Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about ways you can prevent getting HPV.
- **Quit smoking.** Smoking is linked to a number of health conditions, but it can be hard to quit. You can call the toll-free Texas Tobacco Quit Line at 1-877-YES-QUIT (937-7848) for free and confidential one-on-one counseling and support services.

Learn more about available cervical cancer screenings and diagnostic services at www.HealthyTexasWomen.org.