

What Everyone Should Know About HPV and Cancer

Do you know about the link between cervical cancer and human papillomavirus, or HPV?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States — and causes most cases of cervical cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). And since it usually has no symptoms, most people don't know they have it.

What you may not know is that HPV has also been linked to other types of cancer. Those include vulvar and vaginal cancers in women and penile cancers in men. In both men and women, the virus may cause genital warts, anal cancer, and some head and neck cancers.

A plan for prevention

With three key steps, you may help protect yourself from HPV and cancer.* If you're the parent of a preteen, these are important steps to know as well.

1. Take your best shot. Males and females can be immunized for the types of HPV that are most likely to cause cervical cancer.

CDC recommends routine HPV vaccination for all preteen boys and girls ages 11 to 12 years. Catch-up vaccines are recommended up to age 21 for all males and up to age 26 for all females and some males. Shots are given in a series. To be protected, it's important to get them all.

Talk with your doctor to find out whether the vaccine is right for you or others in your family.

2. Put yourself to the test. According to the American Cancer Society, most cervical cancers in this country occur in women who have never had a Pap test — or who have not had one in recent years.

Regular Pap tests can help spot cancer. Better yet, these screenings may help alert your doctor to precancerous changes — abnormal cells that may be treated before they become cancerous.

Talk with your doctor about a screening schedule that's right for you. He or she may advise that you be tested for HPV as well.

3. Make smart choices. Other steps may help lower the risk of HPV and cervical cancer. For instance:

- **Practice safer sex.** HPV is spread through sexual contact. So the only sure way to avoid HPV — and other sexually transmitted infections — is not to have sex. If you do, limit sex to just one partner. Be sure your partner is having sex only with you. And use condoms for all sexual activity. Keep in mind that condoms lower — yet don't eliminate — the risk.
- **Snuff out cigarettes.** Women who smoke may have a higher risk of cervical cancer.



What to do next

Learn more about the screenings and immunizations that may be right for you at [uhc.com/preventivecare](https://www.uhc.com/preventivecare).

*Check your benefit plan to see what services may be covered.

What Is Cervical Cancer?

It starts in the cells of the cervix — the lower, narrow end of the uterus, or womb. Unchecked, the cancer may spread to other parts of the body — and become much more serious.

The information provided here is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to be nor should be construed as medical or other advice. Talk to an appropriate health care professional to determine what may be right for you.