

## A Simple Test Could Save Your Life

Cervical cancer starts with a virus:  
HPV (human papillomavirus).  
The HPV test can  
identify high-risk HPV  
before cancer develops.



### Know the Facts: HPV + Your Health

- The human papillomavirus (HPV) is transmitted through sexual intercourse or direct genital contact with an infected partner.
- Even if you're not currently infected with the virus, chances are you have been. An estimated 75 to 80 percent of Americans (men and women) have had the virus by the time they are 50.
- Most of the time, your immune system fights off the virus just as it does a cold or flu virus. In fact, 75 to 90 percent of HPV infections disappear within a year.
- High-risk HPV infections do not cause symptoms, and cervical cancer often does not cause symptoms until it is at a very advanced stage.
- High-risk HPV can only be detected with an HPV test.

### What does a positive HPV test result mean?

- First, it does not mean you have cervical cancer.
- If your Pap test is normal but you have HPV, your health care provider can monitor you so that any cell changes can be caught early, before they cause problems.
- If you test positive for HPV two times in a row, even if your Pap test is normal, you will need additional tests.
- While there is no way to get rid of the virus itself, the abnormal cells can be treated, preventing them from becoming cancerous.

Learn more about preventing cervical cancer.

Visit: [www.HealthyWomen.org](http://www.HealthyWomen.org)



## Preventing Cervical Cancer: An Ages and Stages Guide

Protect yourself against cervical cancer by knowing which prevention strategy to choose and when. Here's a quick look:

### **HPV Vaccine:**

- Highly effective in protecting against the most common types of HPV that cause 70 percent of cervical cancer.
- Recommended for girls ages 11 and 12, although it is approved for girls and young women ages 9 to 26. Ideally, the vaccine should be given before a girl or woman becomes sexually active.

### **Pap Test:**

- Evaluates cells from the cervix for abnormalities, including precancerous and cancerous changes.
- Women 21 and older should have Pap tests regularly.

### **HPV Test:**

- Detects the high-risk types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer before cervical disease or cancer develops.
- When combined with a Pap test, the HPV test is better at identifying women at risk for developing cervical cancer than the Pap test alone.
- Recommended for women 30 years of age and older. Identifying the virus in younger women wouldn't be helpful because HPV is so common and cervical cancer so rare in younger women.

**If you are age 30 or older, schedule your HPV test today!**

Get more resources and information about cervical cancer and the HPV test at [www.HealthyWomen.org](http://www.HealthyWomen.org) and [www.PearlofWisdom.us](http://www.PearlofWisdom.us).