

Cervical Cancer Fact Sheet

What's the Issue?

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that is caused by persistent infection with human papillomavirus or HPV, which is a group of common and contagious viruses that includes more than 100 different types. More than 30 types of HPV are spread through sexual contact, and can be categorized into [oncogenic](#) (cancer-causing) or non-oncogenic types. Cervical cancer begins in the cervix and becomes gradually more invasive.

Cervical cancer includes:

- [Squamous cell carcinomas](#) (cancer that begins in epithelial cells, like the skin) comprise about 80-90 percent of all cervical cancers.
- [Adenocarcinomas](#) (cancer that begins in glandular tissue) comprise the remaining 10-20 percent.

According to the American Cancer Society, "Cervical precancers and early cancers usually show no symptoms or signs."

Cervical cancer's most common symptom is abnormal vaginal bleeding.

- An unusual discharge from the vagina that occurs separate from menstrual cycles can be a symptom of cervical cancer, as well.
- Bleeding also may occur after sexual intercourse, douching or a pelvic exam.
- After menopause, symptoms may include vaginal bleeding or increased vaginal discharge.

Why Should I Care?

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among women worldwide, resulting in an estimated 270,000 deaths each year. 80% of all women will contract HPV by the time they are 50. According to the American Cancer Society, approximately 11,150 women will develop cervical cancer in the United States in 2007, and nearly 3,700 will die from it.

Cervical cancer is a leading cause of death for women, especially Hispanic and African American women. 11.1% of all cervical cancer cases affect African American women, 12.7% Hispanic, 7.9% White, 7.6% Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 6.6% American Indian.

The mortality rates for these women are also startling: 4.6% African American, 3.4% American Indian, 3.1% Hispanic, 2.2% White and American Indian will succumb to cervical cancer.

What Can I Do?

There is now a vaccine available to protect women against cervical cancer. One vaccine was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in June 2006 for females aged nine to 26. This vaccine prevents infection from HPV types 16 and 18, which are responsible for approximately 70 percent of cervical cancer, and HPV types 6 and 11, which are responsible for approximately 90 percent of genital warts. These vaccines are only used to prevent, not treat, cervical cancer.

Routine screening also promotes early detection of this deadly disease. Of the women in the United States who develop cervical cancer, about half have never had a Pap test and an additional 10 percent have not had a Pap test in the last five years.

There are several different treatment options for patients with cervical cancer. The most common are surgery, [chemotherapy](#) and radiation, and in some cases the use of two or more methods works best.

More Resources

[Partnership to End Cervical Cancer](#)

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Information taken from the Partnership to End Cervical Cancer and the American Cancer Society.