

# Cervical Cancer Fact Sheet



## WHEN SHOULD I BEGIN TALKING WITH MY DOCTOR ABOUT CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING?

It is never too early to start talking to your doctor about cervical screenings. Any time you notice changes in your body that might include the below items, it is time to contact your doctor.

- Pain in the pelvic region
- Unusual vaginal discharge. This could mean it contains blood and may occur between periods
- Abnormal vaginal bleeding. This could mean bleeding after sex, after menopause, bleeding and spotting between periods, or having longer or heavier periods than usual
- Pain during sex

(National Cancer Institute, 2019)

## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT AT A CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING APPOINTMENT?

The Pap test (or Pap smear) and HPV test are both done in a doctor's office or clinic.

- If you're getting a Pap test, the doctor will ask you to sit in a chair designed for vaginal exams. Doctors use a plastic or metal instrument called a speculum to widen your vagina. This helps them examine the cervix and use a swab to collect samples of the cells and mucus that surround the cervix. The swab is then sent to a lab
- Pap test = cells are checked for abnormalities
- HPV test = cells are checked for HPV

(National Cancer Institute, 2019)

## HOW OFTEN DO I NEED TO BE SCREENED AND WHY?

- Women ages 21 through 29 should be screened with a Pap test every 3 years
- Women ages 30 through 65 should be screened:
  - Every 5 years with high-risk HPV testing alone
  - Every 5 years with Pap and high-risk HPV testing
  - Every 3 years with a Pap test alone

(National Cancer Institute, 2019)

## RISK FACTORS FOR MORE FREQUENT SCREENINGS FOR CERVICAL CANCER?

- Being infected with HIV
- Being immunosuppressed
- Having been exposed to diethylstilbestrol before birth
- Having been treated for a precancerous cervical lesion or cervical cancer

(National Cancer Institute, 2019)

## WHO DOESN'T NEED TO GET SCREENED REGULARLY FOR CERVICAL CANCER?

- Women younger than 21 years
- Women who have had a total hysterectomy
- Women 65+ years who have had consistent screening, normal results, and are otherwise low risk

(National Cancer Institute, 2019)

