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Things to know about the **Human Papillomavirus (HPV) & Cervical Cancer.**



What is HPV?

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a group of viruses that are extremely common worldwide.
- It is the most common viral infection of the reproductive tract. HPV is sexually transmitted, but penetrative sex is not required for transmission. Skin-to-skin genital contact is a well-recognized mode of transmission.
- Most sexually active women and men will be infected at some point in their lives and some may be repeatedly infected.
- The peak time for acquiring infection for both women and men is shortly after becoming sexually active.
- HPV infections usually clear up without any intervention within a few months after infection and about 90% clear within 2 years.
- HPV is linked with cancers of the cervix, anus, vulva, vagina, penis and oropharynx.

What causes cervical cancer?

- Cancers generally begin when healthy cells in the body develop changes (mutations) in their DNA. A cell's DNA contains the instructions that tell a cell what to do.
- Cervical cancer occurs when the cells in the cervix undergo such changes (mutations).
- Cervical cancer is closely linked with Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Infection

For more information, call or Whatsapp

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Common symptoms of cervical cancer

- **Abnormal vaginal bleeding** – vaginal bleeding outside of your normal menstrual period. This usually occurs after sexual intercourse.
- Vaginal discomfort
- Foul-smelling vaginal discharge
- Dysuria – pain while urinating

What are the other risk factors for cervical cancer?

Only a proportion of HPV infections progress to cancer, but there are other factors that can increase a person's risk for developing cervical cancer including:

- Many sexual partners
- Early sexual activity
- Other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- A weakened immune system
- Smoking
- Lack of access to screening

Treatment – Can Cervical Cancer and HPV be treated?

- **Cervical Cancer is treatable** – The key is early detection. Once a cancer is detected early, that is before it spreads, treatment is usually more successful.
- HPV infection is not routinely treated unless a patient shows symptoms of the infection and then that symptom is treated.

How can I prevent myself from getting Cervical cancer?

- **HPV vaccination.** The best time to get vaccinated is before engaging in your first sexual intercourse. HPV vaccination is available and safe for females from age 9.
- **Have routine pap smear and HPV tests as recommended.** Pap smears look for changes in the cells of the cervix that might become cervical cancer. Any changes that are detected can be monitored or treated in order to prevent cervical cancer. HPV tests look for the HPV virus that can cause these cell changes. Both tests can be done in a doctor's office.
- **Practice safe sex.** Use a condom every time you have sex and limit the number of sexual partners you have.

Cervical Cancer Screening Recommendations

- 21 years old: No screening
- 21 – 29 years old: Pap smear every 3 years
- 30 – 65 years old: HPV and Pap smear co-testing every 5 years
- 65 years old: Screening can be discontinued after either 3 consecutive negative Pap smears or two negative Pap smears and HPV tests within 10 years