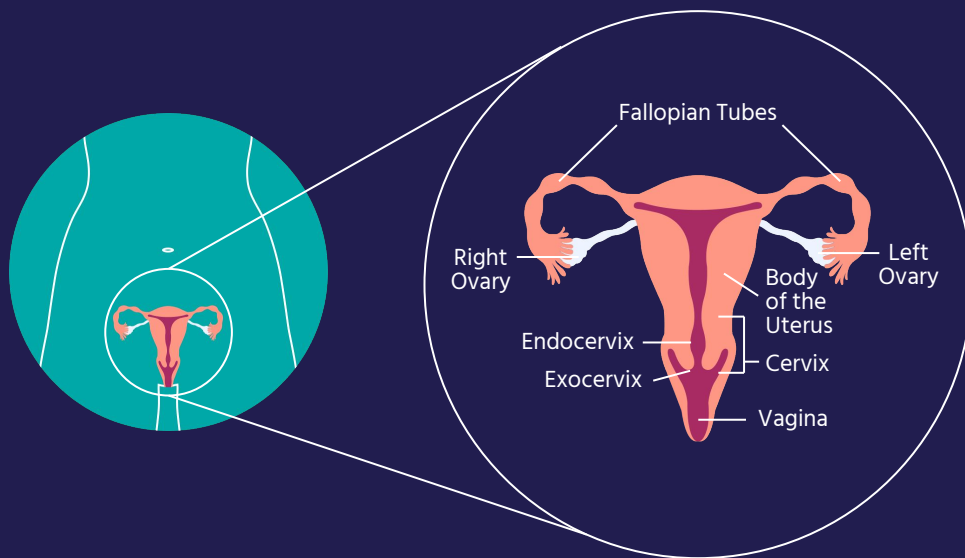




# Learn More About Cervical Cancer Screening

## | Cervical Cancer

The cervix is a part of the female reproductive system and is located between the uterus and the vagina. Cervical cancer is a disease that occurs when cells in the cervix begin to grow out of control.



# When should I start getting screened for cervical cancer?

**The American Cancer Society recommends that people assigned female at birth with an average risk for cervical cancer start screening at age 25.** Cervical cancer is rarely seen in those under the age of 25 and most frequently diagnosed between the ages of 35 and 44.<sup>1</sup> But in the last few years, more people are being diagnosed with cervical cancer at younger ages.<sup>2</sup> **So, knowing the symptoms and how to protect yourself against cervical cancer is the best way to stay healthy.**



## How can I get screened for cervical cancer?

### HPV Test

Human papillomavirus, or HPV, is the most common cause of cervical cancer. It is estimated that 90% of cervical cancer cases are caused by HPV. Testing for HPV is one way to screen for cervical cancer.

### Pap Test

A Pap test, also called a Pap smear, is another common way to screen for cervical cancer. With a Pap test, cells are collected from the cervix and analyzed under a microscope to look for signs of cancer. A Pap test is typically performed by a primary care provider (PCP) or a gynecologist (OB/GYN).

**When you turn 25 and become eligible for cervical cancer screening, or if you are experiencing symptoms, ask your healthcare provider which screening test is best for you.**

1 Cervical Cancer Statistics. Accessed August 24, 2023. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/cervical-cancer/about/key-statistics.html>

2 Surveillance Research Program, National Cancer Institute SEER\*DataExplorer. <https://seer.cancer.gov/statistics-network/explorer/>



# What are the symptoms of cervical cancer that I should look out for?

People with early cervical cancer typically do not experience any symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they may look like:

- ❑ **Abnormal vaginal bleeding**, such as bleeding after vaginal sex, bleeding/spotting between periods, having longer or heavier menstrual periods
- ❑ **Unusual vaginal discharge**, which may contain blood or occur between your periods
- ❑ **Pain during sex**
- ❑ **Pain in the pelvic region**

**It's important to remember that the majority of the time, these symptoms are not due to cancer.** But if you're noticing more than one symptom, if the symptoms don't go away, or if they come back, it's important to talk with a healthcare provider.

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## How can I reduce my risk for cervical cancer?

Even if you're under the age of 25 and are not having symptoms, it's important to know about your cervical health. While there is no way to completely eliminate your risk for cervical cancer, **the best thing you can do to lower your risk is to get vaccinated against HPV.**

HPV vaccination works extremely well, and reduces the risk of HPV-related cancers, such as cervical cancer, by more than 90%. The CDC recommends all people, regardless of sex assigned at birth or gender identity, get vaccinated at age 11-12 years. If you were not vaccinated as a child, the CDC recommends that all people ages 15-26 years get vaccinated. People between the ages of 27 and 45 should talk to their doctor about the possible benefits of vaccination.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> HPV Vaccination: What Everyone Should Know. Published May 22, 2023. Accessed August 24, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/public/index.html>



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