

PLEASE RETURN TO
PEI Women's Institute
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Cervical Cancer

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What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable and treatable forms of cancer, yet it remains one of the most common causes of death for women.

Cervical cancer occurs when cells in the cervix begin to grow uncontrollably and invade nearby tissues. There are several types of cervical cancer, each originating from different cell types within the cervix.

Signs & Symptoms

Early-stage cervical cancer generally produces no signs or symptoms but may include:

- Irregular blood spotting or light bleeding between periods in women of reproductive age
- Postmenopausal spotting or bleeding
- Bleeding after sexual intercourse
- Increased vaginal discharge, sometimes foul smelling

Many women wait too long to seek medical help or may not have easy access to care. As cervical cancer advances, more severe symptoms may appear including:

- persistent back, leg or pelvic pain
- weight loss, fatigue, loss of appetite
- foul-smell discharge and vaginal discomfort
- swelling of a leg or both lower extremities

In many cases, cervical cancer does not produce noticeable symptoms until the disease is in advanced stages.

Cervical Cancer Prevention and Risk

Until we find a cure, prevention is our greatest weapon. Understanding your risk and taking preventive measures is crucial in the fight against cervical cancer. Learn about the factors that contribute to cervical cancer risk and explore prevention strategies to reduce your risk.

Prevention Strategies for Cervical Cancer

Health PEI is aligning with the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer goal of the elimination of cervical cancer by 2040 and is conducting a pilot program to initiate primary Human Papillomavirus (HPV) testing for cervical cancer. Primary HPV testing means the HPV test will be the initial test used when screening for cervical cancer. The test looks for the presence of HPV, including any high-risk types responsible for almost all cervical cancers. HPV

HPV and its relationship to Cervical Cancer?

There are over 100 types of HPV with some leading to health problems such as warts on the hands, feet, and genitals. There is evidence that ongoing infection with some HPV types can lead to the development of pre-cancerous lesions progressing to cancers of the cervix, vulva and vagina in females, penile cancer in males and anal, mouth, and neck cancer in both males and females. Research has identified HPV 16 and 18 to cause up to 78% of all cases of cervical cancer. Other strains of HPV have been recognized as contributing to cancer.

HPV infection is very common, and while most HPV infections go away by themselves, those that persist are more likely to develop into cancer. It is estimated that one in 10 Canadians will develop warts caused by HPV. HPV warts can be treated; they are difficult to remove and often come back after treatment. HPV warts spread to two-thirds of people who come into contact with them and have significant psychosocial impact in those who are affected.

The HPV vaccine is the best way to protect yourself. The vaccine is 99% effective in preventing certain types of HPV, that research has proved is a precursor to various forms of cancer including cervical cancer.

PEI HPV vaccination program includes the vaccine administered to boys and girls in grade 6 and individuals who missed the HPV immunization in Grade 6 since 2007.

Who should be vaccinated

HPV vaccine is recommended for adult males 18 to 26 years of age with the following risk factors:

- having unprotected skin to skin contact with multiple partners (male and female)
- history of genital warts
- individuals who missed the HPV immunization in Grade 6 since 2012

HPV vaccine is recommended for adult females 18 to 45 years of age with the following risk factors:

- having unprotected skin to skin contact with multiple partners (male and female)
- history of genital warts
- an abnormal PAP test
- have a cervix
- unnecessary after 65 who have a negative history
- had a hysterectomy, talk to your health care provider

So...

- You can get vaccinated if you are already sexually active
- have already had an HPV infection because you likely have not been exposed to all types of HPV that the vaccination offers protection against.
- You can further reduce your risk by limiting your sexual partners, using condoms and not smoking
- a transplant recipient,
- being treated with medications that cause immune suppression for three years or more,
- HIV/AIDS positive,
- living with renal failure and requiring dialysis

HPV Screening and Cervical Cancer Prevention

Regular cervical screenings detect abnormal changes in the cells of your cervix, which can help prevent cervical cancer or improve your chance of complete recovery.

HPV (human papillomavirus) testing has replaced Pap tests to screen for cervical cancer on PEI. Nearly 70% of cervical cancers are caused by only two strains of HPV.

HPV testing can detect the virus before it causes significant cell changes. It can also detect high-risk strains of the virus, which are more likely to cause cancer.

Cervical cancer that is detected early is more likely to be treated successfully. Most guidelines suggest that women begin screening for cervical cancer and precancerous changes at age 21. Women can reduce their risk of developing cervical cancer by having screening tests and receiving a vaccine that protects against HPV infection. Screening tests include the PAP test and the HPV DNA test

If you are under surveillance or treatment with a physician, nurse practitioner, or specialist, ask them what frequency of testing is best for you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada <https://www.hpvinfos.ca/>

BC Centre for Disease Control <https://smartsexresource.com/sexually-transmitted-infections/stis-conditions/human-papillomavirus-hpv/>

Government of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/human-papillomavirus-hpv.html>

Canadian Cancer Society <https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/reduce-your-risk/get-vaccinated/human-papillomavirus-hpv>

National Institutes of Health <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/infectious-agents/hpv-and-cancer#q7>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/basic_info/index.htm Contact the provincial Cervical Cancer Screening Service

To book an appointment at one of the cervical cancer screening clinics:

Telephone: 902-360-5901 Toll-free: 1-888-561-2233

QUIZ

1. The PAP test and HPV test are the same.

Yes

No

(HPV (human papillomavirus) testing has replaced Pap tests to screen for cervical cancer on PEI. Nearly 70% of cervical cancers are caused by two strains of HPV.)

2. Which of the following statements are correct for those who should get HPV vaccination?

Anyone who is in grade 3

(Currently there is a Provincial school program for both male and female grade 6)

Anyone who is sexually active

(Both male and female as it is a sexually active virus and though males do not have a cervix, HPV can cause other cancers in other areas)

Any adult between 18 and 45?

Yes for females

No for adult males 18 to 26

Anyone who has a history of HPV

3. Is there a cure for cervical cancer?

Yes

No

(Until we find a cure, prevention is our greatest weapon. Understanding your risk and taking preventive measures.)

4. What are some risk factors for cervical cancer?

- Age over 64
- History of cervical cancer in family
- Skin to skin contact with multiple partners
- Smoking

5. What are some symptoms of cervical cancer?

- Irregular blood or light bleeding
(Irregular blood spotting or light bleeding between periods in women of reproductive age)
- Postmenopausal spotting
(Postmenopausal spotting or bleeding)
- Persistent leg pain
(Persistent back, leg or pelvic pain)

There are no symptoms
(Many women wait too long to seek medical help or may not have easy access to care. As cervical cancer advances, more severe symptoms may appear.)

6. What are actions to prevent cervical cancer?

- Regular cervical screenings
- Being vaccinated for HPV
- Having a Hysterectomy/Tubal Ligation
- Quit Smoking
- All of the above though the first two are much less invasive

7. In order to get cervical cancer, one must have a cervix.

- Yes, without a cervix one cannot have cervical cancer.
- No, HPV that causes cancer can present in other places.

QUIZ
ANSWER SHEETS

1. The PAP test and HPV test are the same.

Yes X

No

(HPV (human papillomavirus) testing has replaced Pap tests to screen for cervical cancer on PEI. Nearly 70% of cervical cancers are caused by two strains of HPV.)

2. Which of the following statements are correct for those who should get HPV vaccination?

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(Currently there is a Provincial school program for both male and female grade 6)

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All of the above though the first two are much less invasive

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No, HPV that causes cancer can present in other places. X