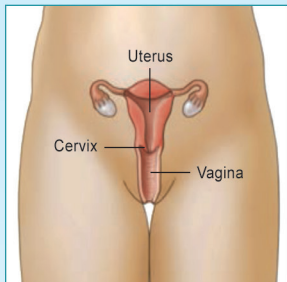


Frequently Asked Questions about CERVICAL CANCER

What is the Cervix?

The cervix is the lower part of the uterus (womb), which opens into the vagina (birth canal). The uterus (womb) is where a baby grows when a woman is pregnant.



Female reproductive system

What is Cervical Cancer?

- Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. When cancer starts in the cervix, it is called **cervical cancer**.
- Cervical cancer is the easiest female cancer to prevent with regular Pap smears and follow-up. It is also highly curable when found and treated early.

What causes Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer is caused by the Human Papilloma Virus or HPV for short. HPV is commonly spread through sexual contact and can cause an infection in the cervix. This may cause the cells of the cervix to change and become pre-cancer cells. Sometimes pre-cancer cells may turn into cancer if they are not found and treated early.

Who gets Cervical Cancer?

All women are at risk for cervical cancer. Cervical cancer occurs most often in women over age 30.

What puts me at greater risk?

In addition to having HPV, several factors may affect your risk of developing cervical cancer including:

- Smoking.
- Having HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) or any other condition which makes it hard for your body to fight off health problems.
- Having given birth to three or more children.
- Multiple sexual partners.

What are the symptoms of Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer may not cause signs and symptoms in its earlier stages. Advanced cervical cancer may cause abnormal bleeding or discharge from the vagina, such as bleeding after sex or bleeding or spotting between your monthly periods. If you have any of these signs, see your health care provider.



Frequently Asked Questions about **CERVICAL CANCER**

How can I find out if I am at risk for Cervical Cancer?

There are three screening tests that can help to detect cervical cancer before it develops:

- The **Pap smear** (or Pap test) is the most commonly used cervical cancer screening test. It looks for pre-cancers, or cell changes, on the cervix that can be treated.
- The **HPV test** looks for HPV – the virus that can cause precancerous cell changes and cervical cancer. It identifies women at high risk for cervical cancer who may need to be treated to prevent cervical cancer.
- The **VIA (Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid)** inspects the cervix, using acetic acid (distilled vinegar) to identify abnormal changes on the cervix and that can be treated to prevent cervical cancer.

What can I do to prevent Cervical Cancer?

- Get a regular Pap smear and know your test result.
- Follow up on abnormal Pap smear.
- Don't smoke/ avoid second hand smoke.
- Use condoms during sex.
- Limit the number of sexual partners.
- You can get the HPV vaccine.

Where can I get a Pap smear done?

A Pap smear can be done at:

- A General Practitioner
- Hospitals or Health Centres
- A specialized Doctor such as a Gynaecologist
- Family Planning Clinics or any
- Branch of the Jamaica Cancer Society.

Do your Pap smear today. It can save your life.

For more information
Contact Ministry of Health
2-4 King Street, Kingston
876-967-1100-5
www.moh.gov.jm



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