



# NC CERVICAL CANCER



## What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer refers to cancer that starts in the cervix. Cervical cancers are usually grouped in two main types, squamous cell carcinoma and adenocarcinoma. Squamous cell carcinoma cervical cancer is more common than adenocarcinoma cervical cancer. Approximately 90% of cervical cancers are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). This means that cervical cancer is highly preventable by getting the HPV vaccine.<sup>1</sup>

## Risk Factors

These risk factors may increase your chances for developing cervical cancer.<sup>2</sup>



- **Gender.** Simply being female.
- **Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection** or HPV exposure.
- **Sexual history.** Having multiple sexual partners.
- **Using birth control pills for 5 or more years.**
- **Giving birth to five or more children.**
- **Having an HIV infection** or other condition that weakens your immune system.
- **Tobacco use** (smoking, cigarettes, cigars, pipes, vaping).



## Symptoms

Some people may not have any symptoms of cervical cancer until the cancer is advanced. Advanced stages of cervical cancer may cause vaginal bleeding or a discharge that is not normal for you. If you have any of these signs, see your health care provider.



## Cervical Cancer in NC

In 2019, 116 North Carolina women died of cervical cancer. It is estimated that 414 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer and 126 women will die from cervical cancer in North Carolina in 2021.<sup>3</sup>

## Screening

Most common form of cervical cancer starts with pre-cancerous changes which can be stopped from developing into cancer.<sup>4</sup> There are two screening tests that can detect cervical cancer early.



- **Pap test** (or Pap smear) is a procedure to collect cells from the cervix to determine if cancer or precancerous cells are present.<sup>5</sup> It is recommended that women start getting a Pap test at 21 years of age. Your doctor will tell you how often you should get a Pap test after your first one. If you are more than 65 years old and have had several years of normal test results, your doctor may tell you that you do not need to have a Pap test anymore.<sup>6</sup>
- **Human papillomavirus (HPV) test** which can be done with cells collected during the Pap test. The HPV test looks to see if there is an HPV infection. This is one condition that can lead to the development of pre-cancers. This test is recommended once you turn 30 years old.



Talk to your healthcare provider about when to start and how often to get screened.

# You can reduce your Cervical Cancer Risk!

- **Get a cervical cancer screening.** Talk to your doctor about when you should start getting cervical cancer screening.
- **Get the HPV vaccine.** The HPV vaccine can prevent cervical cancer and is recommended for both males and females ages 9 to 26.
- **Know your family health history including cancer illnesses and deaths.**
- **Quit tobacco and vaping use.** Quitting takes practice! Coaching and medications can triple your chances of quitting for good. Call 1-800-Quit-Now or check out [www.QuitlineNC.com](http://www.QuitlineNC.com) for help.
- **Use condoms during sex.** HPV, which can cause cervical cancer, is a sexually transmitted virus.
- **Limit your number of sexual partners.**
- **Eat Healthy.** Eat more fruits and vegetables, drink more water and fewer sugar-sweetened beverages and create meal plans to cook at home.
- **Be physically active.** Strive to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week and strength training at least twice a week.



## Treatment

Treatment is usually most successful when cancer is detected early. Cervical cancer options include surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy. The stage of the cervical cancer is usually the most important factor in determining treatment. Talk to your cancer doctor about the treatment options available for your type and stage of cancer. Your doctor can explain the risks and benefits of each treatment and their side effects.

## A cancer diagnosis is an Unexpected Journey.

Talk with your healthcare provider about a health care plan to help track your care and to support your physical and emotional health needs. Ask for a patient navigator. They will help guide you through your journey and connect you to resources and support services. Be your own advocate. Build your support circle. Continue to take steps to be healthy. These steps may help improve your quality of life and lower the risk of your cancer returning.

## Take Action!

Use **My Health Action Plan** to set monthly goals to make healthy lifestyle changes.

<https://publichealth.nc.gov/cccp/>

## Don't wait, start on your My Health Action Plan today!

Need help? Talk to your healthcare provider or visit the resources below.

NC DHHS, Cancer Prevention and Control Branch. <https://publichealth.nc.gov/cccp>

NC DHHS, Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program. <https://bcccp.ncdhhs.gov>

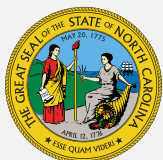
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NC Care360. <https://nccare360.org>



### References

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- 3 - State Center for Health Statistics, NC Department of Health and Human Services, Central Cancer Registry. <https://schs.dph.ncdhhs.gov/data/cancer.cfm>
- 4 - American Cancer Society, Can Cervical Cancer be Prevented? [www.cancer.org/cancer/cervical-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/prevention.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cervical-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/prevention.html)
- 5 - American Cancer Society, The Pap (Papanicolaou) Test. [www.cancer.org/cancer/cervical-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/screening-tests/pap-test.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cervical-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/screening-tests/pap-test.html)
- 6 - CDC, What Should Be Screened for Lung Cancer? North Carolina Central Cancer Registry, Cancer Reports. <https://schs.dph.ncdhhs.gov/data/cancer.cfm>



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