



# Peace of mind

## Take steps to help prevent cervical cancer

### What you need to know

Cervical cancer is most often caused by infection from a virus known as human papillomavirus (HPV). You can get HPV if you have sexual contact with someone who has the virus.<sup>1</sup>

Cervical cancer grows slowly. It starts with small cell changes on the cervix. It can stay in this early stage for up to ten years or more before invading nearby tissue.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Cancer Institute. HPV and cancer. February 19, 2015. Available at: [cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/infectious-agents/hpv-fact-sheet](https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/infectious-agents/hpv-fact-sheet). Accessed February 8, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization. Human papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical cancer. January 24, 2019. Available at: [who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-papillomavirus-\(hpv\)-and-cervical-cancer](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-papillomavirus-(hpv)-and-cervical-cancer). Accessed February 8, 2019.

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# Help yourself stay protected

Talk to your doctor about the HPV vaccine. Be sure to also get regular pelvic exams and Pap tests.

## HPV vaccine

*For girls and women under the age of 26 and boys and men under the age of 21, starting at age 11 or 12.<sup>3</sup>*

The HPV vaccine is most effective if you get it before exposure to HPV (that is, before you are sexually active). This is why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends it for girls as young as 9.

## Pelvic exams and Pap tests

*For women 21 years of age and older.*

Even if you get the vaccine, it's still best to get regular pelvic exams and Pap tests. During a pelvic exam, a doctor checks your reproductive organs to make sure they're healthy.

A Pap test looks for changes on your cervix. These cell changes can lead to cancer, if not treated early. The good news is that doctors can catch these changes and treat them to help prevent cervical cancer.

## When should you get a Pap test?

- Women from ages 21 to 65 should have a Pap test every three years.<sup>4</sup>
- Women from ages 30 to 65 may choose to have a Pap test and an HPV test every five years instead.<sup>4</sup>

## More ways to protect yourself

Talk to your doctor about chlamydia and gonorrhea screenings if you're sexually active and are:

- Age 24 or younger
- Age 25 or older and at increased risk for infection

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Put your mind at ease by taking preventive actions.  
**Talk with your doctor today.**

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<sup>3</sup>CDC. National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. Clinician FAQ: CDC recommendations for HPV vaccine 2-dose schedules. Available at: [cdc.gov/hpv/downloads/HCVG15-PTT-HPV-2Dose.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/downloads/HCVG15-PTT-HPV-2Dose.pdf). Accessed November 28, 2018.

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Final recommendation statement. Cervical cancer: screening. August 2018. Available at: [uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Document/RecommendationStatementFinal/cervical-cancer-screening2](https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Document/RecommendationStatementFinal/cervical-cancer-screening2). Accessed November 28, 2018.

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