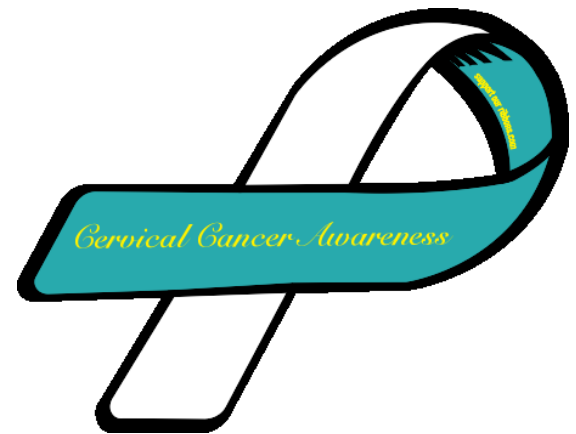


Cervical Cancer Awareness

Cervical Cancer forms in the tissues of the cervix. This is a slow growing cancer that may not have symptoms initially, but can be found with regular Pap tests. It begins in cells on the surface of the cervix. Over time, the cancer can invade more deeply into the cervix and into nearby tissues



The cancer cells can break away from the original tumor and spread. If this occurs, the cancer cells enter the blood vessels or lymph vessels, which branch into all tissues of the body. The cancer cells may then attach to other tissues and grow to form new tumors. Those tumors can then cause cancer in other parts of the body.

The following are factors that can increase the risk of developing cervical cancer:

- *HPV infection*
- *Lack of regular Pap tests*
- *Smoking*
- *Weakened immune system*
- *Sexual history*
- *Using birth control for a long time*
- *Giving birth to more than 5 children*

HPV infection: The number one cause of cervical cancer

- Human papillomaviruses (HPVs) are a group of over 100 related viruses.
- The viruses are called papilloma viruses because some types may cause warts, or papillomas, which are noncancerous tumors.
- The HPVs that cause warts that grow on hands and feet are not the same as the HPVs that cause growths in the throat or genital area.
- Persistent HPV infections are known to be the main cause of cervical cancer.
- In 2007, it was estimated that 11,000 women in the US would be diagnosed with cervical cancer and almost 4,000 would die from it.
- There are two types of HPV viruses: low risk and high risk. Low risk viruses rarely cause lesions that develop into cancer. High risk viruses are more likely to lead to the development of cancer.

Gardasil: The HPV Vaccine

Gardasil is the only cervical cancer vaccine that protects against four types of HPV. It protects against two types of HPV that cause 70% of all cervical cancers and two types that cause 90% of genital warts.



The vaccine is given to girls ages 9-26. It's recommended for girls as young as 9 because it works before there is any contact with HPV types 6,11,16, and 18. The vaccine is still recommended for girls that are sexually active because it is unlikely that there has been contact with

all four types of these HPVs. Gardasil is given in three doses over a six month period.

2



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