

## About cervical screening

Regular screening can reduce the risk of developing cervical cancer by 70%. All women who have ever had sex should be regularly screened once a year for the first 3 years, then every 2 years until age 69. Screening is free of charge and is offered by family doctors and medical clinics throughout BC. Call your doctor or health care provider to make an appointment.

To learn more see our brochure "cervical cancer-protect yourself with regular pap tests".



## Did you know?

- Almost all cervical cancers are caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).
- Genital HPV is usually spread by sexual contact, not just sexual intercourse.
- HPV is very common, and will usually go away on its own within 24 months.
- For some women, HPV will not go away and over time this can cause abnormal cells in the cervix that can change to cancer.
- The HPV vaccines available can prevent most but not all cervical cancers. Regular screening is the best protection against cervical cancer, even after vaccination.

# hpv & cervical cancer

What you should know, and do

The BC Cancer Agency is committed to reducing the incidence of cancer, reducing the mortality from cancer, and improving the quality of life of those living with cancer. It provides a comprehensive cancer control program for the people of B.C. by working with community partners to deliver a range of oncology services, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, research, education, supportive care, rehabilitation and palliative care.

The BC Cancer Foundation is an independent charitable organization that supports research and care at the BC Cancer Agency. You can help support cancer research by donating to the BC Cancer Foundation at 604.877.6040 or toll free 1.888.906.CURE (2873) or visit their website at: [www.bccancerfoundation.com](http://www.bccancerfoundation.com)



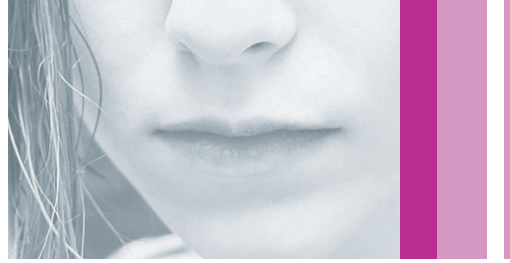
**BC Cancer Agency**  
CARE & RESEARCH

**CERVICAL CANCER  
SCREENING PROGRAM**



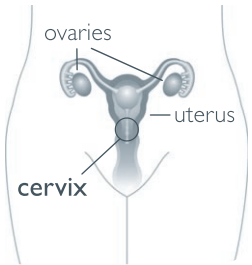
BC Centre for Disease Control





## HPV and cervical cancer

Almost all cervical cancers are caused by certain types of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), a virus that is transmitted by sexual contact, not just sexual intercourse. There are more than 100 types of HPV and about 40 of these that can infect the genital area. Some of the genital HPV types cause genital warts and about 15 others can cause cervical cancer. HPV is very common and there are usually no symptoms. Most adults will have had HPV at some time in their lives and it will usually go away on its own within 24 months without any problem.



For some women, the HPV will not go away. Over time, the HPV can cause abnormal cervical cells that can change to cervical cancer. Regular screening is the best way to find abnormal cells early when they can be easily removed.

## How do you get HPV?

Genital HPV is usually transmitted by sexual contact, not just sexual intercourse. Although condoms are very effective in preventing other sexually transmitted infections, they are not as effective in preventing HPV. This is because HPV can be found on skin not covered by the condom.

## Can HPV be treated?

There are treatments for the HPV types that cause genital warts, but these have not been shown to work for the HPV types that cause cervical cancer. Most HPV infections will usually go away on their own within 24 months without any problem. Cigarette smoking can delay or prevent this process.



## HPV testing

HPV testing can be used in three possible ways:

1. As a screening test with the Pap test to help find women at risk of developing cervical cancer.
2. As a follow-up test after a mildly abnormal Pap test result to help decide if treatment is needed or not.
3. As a follow-up test after treatment for abnormal cervical cells to help decide if the treatment has been successful.

The Cervical Cancer Screening Program is currently investigating the use of HPV testing in the province of B.C.

Before having an HPV test, consider the following:

- HPV is very common in women under the age of 30, and will usually go away on its own without any problem. Thus, HPV testing is not recommended for women under age 30.
- HPV infection in men can be found anywhere in the genital area. Thus, it is difficult to collect a sample for HPV testing.

## HPV vaccination

HPV vaccines can prevent the two most common types of HPV linked to cervical cancers but may not be effective if there has already been an infection with these HPV types. These vaccines protect against most but not all cervical cancers. Therefore, regular cervical screening should continue, even after vaccination.



For more information, please call the Cervical Cancer Screening Program at **604.877.6200** or visit our website at: [www.bccancer.bc.ca/cervicalscreening](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/cervicalscreening)