



10 facts about cervical cancer every woman should know

Every day in the UK, around 9 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer.

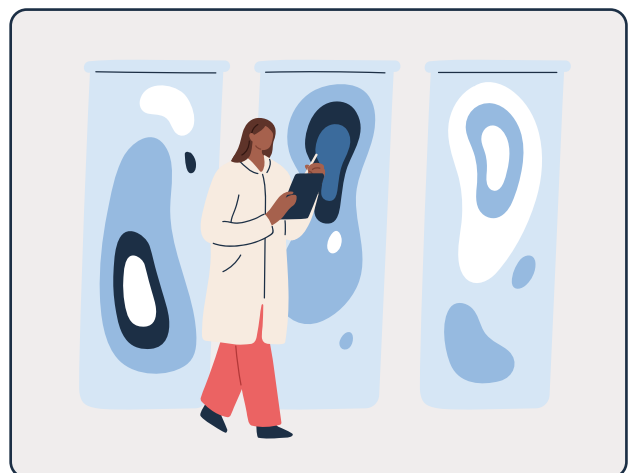


As a result of the country's successful screening programme, we see 25% fewer cases of cervical cancer than 40 years ago.



Women aged 30-34 years old are most likely to be diagnosed.

For this number to continue declining it's essential for all women to be aware of the facts about cervical cancer and other gynaecologic cancers. Here are ten facts about cervical cancer every woman should know.



1

Cervical cancer is caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). **HPV is spread by skin-to-skin contact most commonly during sexual activity.** Most sexually active people will have HPV at some point in their lives, but few women will get cervical cancer.

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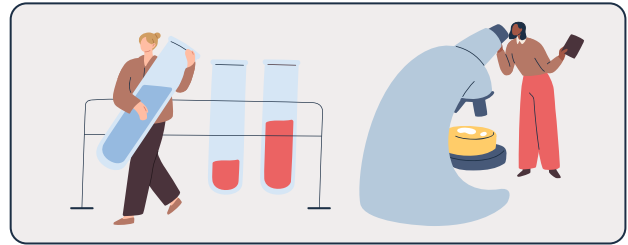
There are more than 200 different HPV viruses. Some low-risk types of HPV can cause genital warts. However, **types 16 and 18 are responsible for most HPV related cancers,** including cervical cancer.

3

In addition to cervical cancer **HPV can also cause cancers of the anus, vagina, penis** and some types of mouth and throat cancers.

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In most cases, our body's immune system clears the HPV infection. However, **smokers and those with a weakened immune system are at greater risk**. If a high-risk HPV infection is not cleared it can start to cause cell changes which result in cancers.

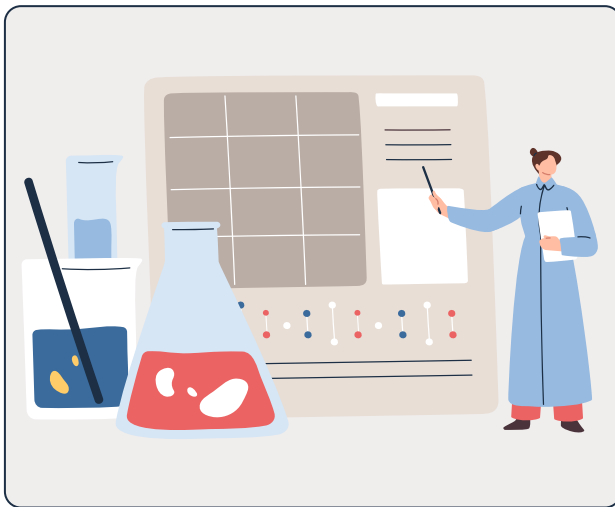


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The aim of cervical smear tests is to detect high risk forms of HPV in women and to check for early changes in their cervical cells before they become cancerous. The aim of the UK vaccination programme is to prevent HPV infections occurring in the first place.

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Cervical cancer **vaccines are most effective for girls and young women before they become sexually active**. The NHS currently offers the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine to girls and boys aged 12 to 13 years (born after 1 September 2006) as part of the NHS vaccination programme.



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Cervical cancer usually takes years to develop, so there's plenty of time to catch it early. When cell changes are **picked up before they're cancerous they are very treatable** with an outpatient procedure and/or colposcopy. Cervical cancer caught in the early stages has a good survival rate.

8

Gynaecologic cancers are often diagnosed at later stages because the symptoms can be hard to spot. That's why it's **important to see a doctor regularly and get screened** for these diseases. Women aged 25 to 64 are invited to get a screening every three to five years. You need to be registered with a GP to get your screening invitations.

9

The **symptoms of cervical cancer can be hard to spot in the early stages**. They include bleeding between periods and after sex, heavier periods than usual, unexplained pelvic pain, and unusual vaginal discharge.

Remember, to reduce the risk of cervical cancer, or any other diseases caused by HPV, it's important to: get vaccinated, stop smoking, wear condoms during intercourse, and attend regular cervical smear tests. If you have any concerns, or are experiencing any of the symptoms listed above contact your GP immediately.

10

There are several effective treatments for cervical cancer once it's reached a more advanced stage. The main treatments are: surgery in which doctors remove the cancerous tissue; radiation therapy where high-energy rays (similar to X-rays) kill the cancer; and chemotherapy to shrink or kill the cancer.

By knowing the facts about cervical cancer and other gynaecologic cancers, women can take steps to protect themselves and their loved ones. Be sure to talk to your doctor about your risks and what you can do to stay healthy. Our experts are here to help. Contact your HealthHero or Validium service if you need support.

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