



# Women's Health

## Cervical Cancer

### Screening for cervical cancer

is available at CANSA's Care Centres and Mobile Health Clinics country-wide



### Regular Pap smears can save your life

#### *What is cervical cancer?*

- The cervix is the lower part or mouth of the uterus (womb)
- It is one of the most common cancers among South African women
- It is curable if detected and treated in the early stages

#### *What are the symptoms?*

- Pelvic pain that is unrelated to other conditions such as menstruation or physical exertion
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Abnormal vaginal bleeding (after sexual intercourse or after douching), heavy periods or heavy spotting between periods, or an additional period during the monthly cycle - any heavy, sudden onset of abnormal vaginal bleeding should immediately be reported to your medical practitioner
- Any abnormal vaginal discharge, with or without an odour

#### *What is a Pap smear?*

- It is a test to detect abnormal cells in the cervix to ensure early diagnosis
- It is uncomfortable but painless



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# Are you at risk for cervical cancer? Find out!

You have a higher risk for cervical cancer if...	Why?
<i>You have persistent Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) infections</i>	HPV infection of the cervix is the primary risk factor for cervical cancer and is associated with 70% of all cases
<i>You have a weakened immune system</i>	Women with weakened immune systems - when diagnosed with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) or when taking immune-suppressing drugs for auto-immune diseases or after organ transplants - are more likely to develop cervical cancer
<i>You have or have had many sexual partners or if your partner has or had many partners</i>	Many sexual partners increases your risk of HPV infections. Being sexually active from a very young age increases exposure. Women in same sex relationships should also be screened regularly as HPV is passed through skin-to-skin contact
<i>You haven't had a Pap smear in the past three or more years</i>	Pap smear for cervical cancer is the single most effective screening procedure. Women who have never had a Pap smear or who have not had one for several years have an increased risk
<i>You're a smoker</i>	Recent research established that smoking increases cervical cancer risk by 50%
<i>You're of child-bearing age (18-40 years of age)</i>	Most high risk pre-cancerous lesions are found in women of childbearing age. Also, multiple pregnancies increase the risk of cervical cancer when between 5 to 7 full-term pregnancies have been experienced
<i>Longterm use of oral contraceptives</i>	Research has shown that oral contraceptive use increases the risk for cervical cancer, especially among younger women
<b><i>It is possible to develop cervical cancer with or without the risk factors listed here. However, the more risk factors you have, the greater your likelihood of developing cervical cancer. Find out from your health practitioner or CANSA Care Centre what you can do to lower your risk.</i></b>	<p><b>What is HPV?</b></p> <p>Human Papilloma Viruses (HPVs) are a group of more than 100 related viruses. Some HPVs, such as those that cause the common warts that grow on hands and feet, do not spread easily. About 15 high-risk HPV types (also called oncogenic or carcinogenic HPVs) have been identified, including HPV types 16 and 18, which together cause about 70 % of all cervical cancers. High risk HPVs also cause some cancers of the anus, vulva, vagina, and penis. In addition, oral HPV infection causes some cancers of the oropharynx (the middle part of the throat, including the soft palate, the base of the tongue, and the tonsils). It has been estimated that HPV infection accounts for approximately 5% of all cancers worldwide.</p> <p>HPVs are transmitted via skin-to-skin contact. About 40 HPV types are sexually transmitted and spread through genital contact. Contact your doctor to find out about having a HPV test done.</p>
<b><i>If you found this information helpful and would like to assist CANSA in funding further research and education, please consider making a donation at any of our CANSA Care Centres country-wide</i></b>	

**For more information on cervical cancer contact CANSA**



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