

# Cervical Cancer

## **Cervical Cancer in the U.S.**

Both incidence and mortality for invasive cancer of the cervix have declined steadily in this country over the past three decades. The U.S. incidence rates are generally lower than other parts of the world, such as India and South America. These trends are largely due to successful use of Pap smears to detect pre-malignant changes or early cancer. However, in spite of our ability to prevent this cancer, according to the 1998 American Cancer Society, *Cancer Facts & Figures*, an estimated 13,700 women in the U.S. were diagnosed with cervical cancer and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) reports that 4,340 women died from this disease.

Additionally, African American women have a higher rate of cervical cancer than White women.

The two most important measures a woman can take to reduce her chance of getting cervical cancer are to get regular Pap smears and to use safer sex practices

## Risk Factors for Cervical Cancer

Most cervical cancers (85%) are associated with human papilloma virus (HPV), a virus passed along through sexual contact. The following behaviors make HPV infection — and therefore cancer — of the cervix more likely:

- A higher number of sexual partners over a lifetime
- Sexual activity with a man who has had multiple sexual partners
- Early age at first intercourse

Other factors that may influence the development of cervical cancer are:

- Long-term oral contraceptive use
- Poor immune system function
- Infection with HIV/AIDS
- Smoking

## Prevention of Cervical Cancer

The two most important measures a woman can take to reduce her chance of getting cervical cancer are:

- Get regular Pap smears to screen for early cancer or lesions which may become cancerous (dysplasias)
- Use safer sex practices, such as condom use and decreasing the number of sexual partners, to lower exposure to infectious agents.

## Early Detection

**Why is early detection important?**

- Cases detected early (local disease) have about a 92% chance of living for at least five more years.
- Cases detected at the distant stage (when disease has spread to another part of the body) have only a 16% chance of living for five more years.

## How to Improve your Chances of Detecting Cervical Cancer Early:

See your health care provider about regular Pap smears. **Women with no risk factors** should do the following:

- Start having annual Pap smears within three years after becoming sexually active, but no later than age 21.
- If three in a row are normal it might be possible to have a Pap smear every 2-3 years

**Women with the following risk factors** should discuss with their providers having Pap smears more often:

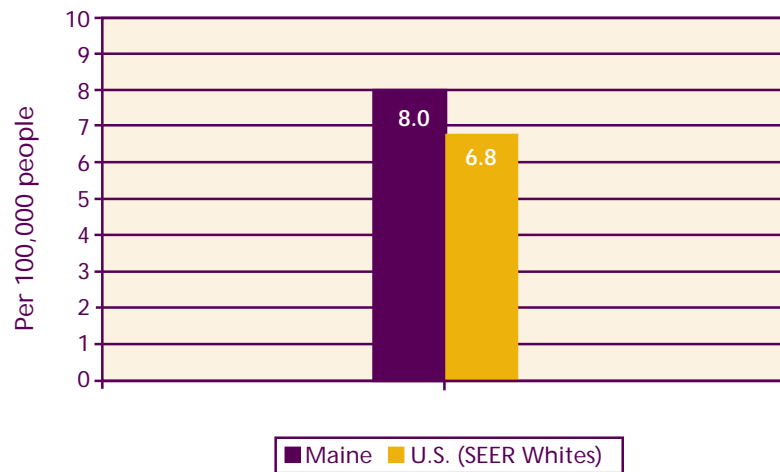
- A history of an abnormal Pap smear
- A history of genital warts or any Sexually Transmitted Disease
- Known HPV or HIV infection
- Early age at first sexual intercourse
- History of multiple sexual partners

## Burden of Cervical Cancer in Maine

- From 1997 to 1998, 64 women on average were diagnosed with cervical cancer each year.
- Each year 21 women died of cervical cancer on average.
- Over 70% of the cases in Maine occur in women under age 60.

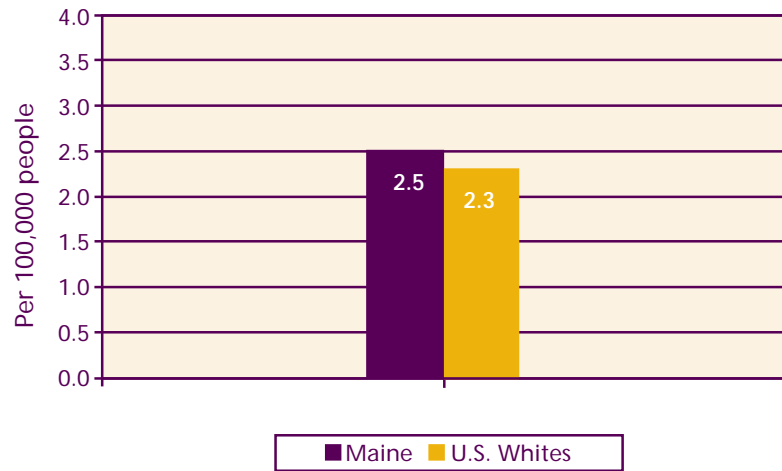
The age-adjusted incidence rates of cervical cancer in Maine were not statistically different from the U.S. rates.

Age-Adjusted Incidence Rates by Sex, Maine and U.S.  
Cervical Cancer, 1997-1998



The age-adjusted mortality rate for cervical cancer in Maine was not statistically different from the U.S. rate.

Age-Adjusted Mortality Rates by Sex, Maine and U.S.  
Cervical Cancer, 1997-1998



Cervical cancer is one of the few cancers diagnosed in younger, as well as older, women. The age distribution is younger because the development of cervical cancer is strongly related to a sexually transmitted virus (human papilloma virus).

Maine Age-Specific Incidence Rates  
Cervical Cancer, 1997-1998

