

What is Cervical Health Awareness Month?

Every year, more than 14,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer. To raise awareness about the significant role appropriate screenings and vaccination play in cervical health, Congress has designated January as Cervical Health Awareness Month. When cervical cancer is found early, it is highly treatable and associated with long survival and good quality of life.

Risk factors for cervical cancer include:

- Almost all cervical cancer is caused by a persistent human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.
- Cervical cancer usually affects women between 30 and 50, but younger women are also at risk.
- Smoking weakens the immune system, which can lead to persistent HPV infection.

What Can You Do?

Screening Tests - The most common kind of cervical cancer begins with changes that happen before cancer develops. Early-detection is key for the prevention and treatment of cervical cancer as women who have been regularly screened before age 65 rarely develop cervical cancer. Two tests help prevent cervical cancer or find it early:

- **The Pap test** looks for precancers, which are cell changes on the cervix that might become cervical cancer if not properly treated.
- **The HPV (human papillomavirus) test** looks for the virus that can cause cell changes and help healthcare providers know which women are at highest risk for cervical cancer.


Vaccination - The **HPV vaccine** protects against the types of HPV that most often cause cervical cancers. HPV vaccination prevents new HPV infections, but does not treat existing infections or diseases. The Centers for Disease Control [recommends](#) that women should get screened for cervical cancer regularly, even if an HPV vaccine has been received.

Live a Healthy Lifestyle - As with many health conditions, maintaining your overall health is an important factor of preventing cervical cancer.

- **Don't smoke** or try to quit if you already do. Women who smoke are about twice as likely as those who don't smoke to get cervical cancer.

Scan the QR code below to access this document in an online format.





You can access the easy-to-understand MyHealthfinder Tool to see which screening tests and vaccines you or your loved ones need to stay healthy by [clicking here](#).

Did you know?

Routine gynecological care exams are covered by the State of Maine Health Plan at 100% with no copay when provided by an in-network doctor or specialist. [Click here](#) to learn more.