

who are uninfected and do not smoke.

- 7 Extended birth control use** – Using birth control pills for more than five years may increase the risk.
- 8 Number of children** – Some studies suggest that giving birth to many children may increase the risk.
- 9 Diethylstilboestrol (DES)** – This chemical increases the risk of cervical cancer to all female foetuses exposed to this drug before birth.

What tests will I have to take to detect it?

Your physician will review your medical history and conduct a pelvic exam. If your doctor suspects some of your symptoms to be associated with cervical cancer, you may be asked to take a Pap test, which examines cells collected from the cervix to see whether they are cancerous or not.

If your Pap test shows abnormal results, your doctor may ask you to have colposcopy, in which your doctor uses a device with a bright light and magnifying lens to examine the tissue. In addition, your doctor may ask you to have a biopsy, where a tissue sample is removed from the cervix to be examined by a pathologist under a microscope.

You may be asked to take a transvaginal ultrasound, CT scan, or MRI to get a proper image of the tumour.

What is the treatment for this type of cancer?

Surgery is one option, especially if the cancer is in

its early stages, where the surgeon will remove the cervix, uterus, and surrounding tissues, which may include the ovaries, fallopian tubes, lymph nodes and even part of the vagina.

Women who cannot undergo surgery due to other health issues will usually be treated using radiation therapy, which uses high-energy radiation rays to destroy cancer cells. Radiation therapy may also be used if the tumour has breached the layers of the uterus and invaded the outer tissues. Chemotherapy or using anti-cancer drugs to eliminate cancer cells is also an option.

Some women will be recommended to treat cervical cancer using biological therapy, where certain substances travel through the blood affecting cells all over the body. In this method, the immune system naturally fights the cancer.

What can I do to prevent cervical cancer?

Make sure you get yearly examination from your physician. Make sure you take a Pap test yearly once you turn 18. Practice safe sex. Avoid behaviours that can expose you to human papilloma virus or HPV. Implement a healthy diet, low in fats and processed foods. Exercise and maintain a healthy weight. Again, do not forget to talk to your physician if you experience any of the risk factors associated with uterine cancer.

Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre
7A Block R-3, Johar Town, Lahore, Pakistan
Tel: +92 42 3590 5000 Ext 4012 | Fax: +92 42 3594 5151
www.shaukatkhanum.org.pk

PGSMPO0201E

INFORMATION ON CERVICAL CANCER



Shaukat Khanum
Memorial Cancer Hospital
and Research Centre

A rise in the incidence of cervical cancer has been noted in the women of Pakistan, partly due to a lack of awareness and inability to get yearly physical exams.

What is cervical cancer?

The cervix is the lower, narrow part of the uterus, which connects the uterus to vagina. The cervical canal is a passageway through which menstrual blood flows out each month. The cervix is also responsible for creating mucus that allows the sperm to move from the vagina into the uterus. During pregnancy, the cervix closes to help keep the baby inside the uterus and dilates during childbirth to allow the baby to pass through the vagina.

Cervical cancer occurs when the cells on the surface of the cervix grow out of control and over time move deep into the cervix and neighbouring tissue. They can also break away and spread through the blood or lymph vessels to other parts of the body.

What are the symptoms associated with cervical cancer?

The most common symptoms of cervical cancer include abnormal bleeding from the vagina, occurring between regular periods or after sexual intercourse, touching or a pelvic exam. Watch out for menstrual periods that are heavier or last for more than seven days or an increase in vaginal discharge. Other symptoms include bleeding after menopause and pelvic pain, especially during sexual intercourse.

Other infections may also lead to similar symptoms. So, while at most times these symptoms are not due to cervical cancer, if you are experiencing any of these symptoms you should schedule an appointment with your doctor to diagnose the problem and have it treated as early as possible.

What are the risk factors associated with cervical cancer?

Studies have shown the following risk factors to increase the incidence greatly.

- 1 Human papilloma viruses (HPV)** – If you have HPV viruses, which are passed through sexual contact and can lead to genital warts, cancer and other problems that infect the cervix, you are at a major risk factor for cervical cancer.
- 2 Age** – Cancer of the cervix occurs most often in women over the age of 40.
- 3 Pap test** – Regular pap tests can identify pre-cancerous cells and help you prevent cervical cancer.
- 4 Weak immune system** – If you have an HIV infection or are taking

immune suppressing drugs, you have a higher than average risk of developing cervical cancer.

- 5 Sexual history** – Women with multiple sexual partners are at a higher risk.
- 6 Smoking** – If you are infected with HPV and smoke, you have a much greater risk than those

Robert Morreale/Visual Explanations, LLC

