

Healthcare Awareness Spotlight:

January Is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

Happy New Year! The first month of 2025 is packed full of hopes and dreams. January ushers in positivity and the promise of hard work. January sees loved ones striving for optimal health outcomes. It is also the month dedicated to raising awareness about cervical cancer. Ribbons of teal and white are seen prominently worn by those who have been affected by cervical cancer in one way or another – they are the staunch advocates of health literacy, and champions for further research.

What Is Cervical Cancer?

The cervix is what connects the body of the uterus to the vagina. Anyone with a cervix is at risk of developing cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer is a disease that occurs when cells of the lining of the cervix grow out of control. Although cervical cancer starts from glandular or squamous cells with abnormal changes, only some women with these changes of the cervix will develop cancer. For most women, these abnormal cells will be just that – abnormal cells. But, in some women, these abnormal cells can develop into invasive cancers.

Types of Cervical Cancer

There are two main types of cervical cancer: squamous cell carcinoma and adenocarcinoma. Most cervical cancers are squamous cell carcinomas. These cancers develop from cells in the exocervix, or the outer part of the cervix seen during a speculum examination. The other cervical cancers are adenocarcinomas. Adenocarcinomas are cancers that develop from glandular cells. Cervical adenocarcinoma develops from the mucus-producing

gland cells of the endocervix, or the opening of the cervix that leads to the uterus.

There are less common cervical cancers that have features of both squamous cell carcinomas and adenocarcinomas. These are called adenosquamous carcinomas or mixed carcinomas.

Risk Factors

It is important to know the risk factors of developing cervical cancer. Known risk factors include infection by the human papillomavirus (HPV); an early sexual history, with activity starting younger than age 18, and with many sexual partners; chlamydia infection; long-term use of oral contraceptives; three or more full term pregnancies; women younger than age 20 at first full term pregnancy; and smoking.

There are also certain risk factors that you can't change or improve. These include having a family history of cervical cancer. Another risk factor that cannot be changed includes having received diethylstilbestrol (DES) from 1938-1971. DES was a hormonal drug given to women to prevent miscarriages. Daughters of those women are

also at increased risk of squamous cell cancers.

Research Facts

The American Cancer Society® estimates the commonality of cervical cancer in the United States for 2024 will include:

- About 13,820 new cases of invasive cervical cancer will be diagnosed.
- About 4,360 women will die from cervical cancer.

According to statistics from the American Cancer Society®, "Cervical cancer incidence rates decreased by more than half from the mid-1970s to the mid-2000s, largely because of the increased use of screening. However, in women ages 30-44, rates have increased 1.7% each year from 2012 to 2019."

"In contrast, rates declined 11% each year for women ages 20-24, probably reflecting the first signs of cancer prevention from HPV vaccination."

Continuing Advocacy

It is important to consider the use of HPV vaccinations in children between the ages of 9-12 to prevent cervical cancer. The HPV test and Pap test are also known as screenings that are used to find abnormal conditions or pre-cancers before they can turn into invasive cancers.

Raising awareness for cervical cancer is important all year round. In January, show your support at local or national organizations, donate funds for research, or attend community walk or run events. You can make a difference in the fight to beat cervical cancer.

Resource: American Cancer Society®: What is Cervical Cancer, Key Statistics, Risk Factors, Prevention

Resource: CDC®: Cervical Cancer Basics

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Triple Play: HHS Issues Three New Final Rules - Compliance Dates and Steps to Take Now

Presenter: Rachel Rose, JD, MBA

Time: 1.02 Hours

Description: In early 2024, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued three new final rules: 42 CFR Part 2, HIPAA Privacy Rule to Support Reproductive Healthcare Privacy, and Preventing Non-Discrimination and Advancing Civil Rights in Healthcare.

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