



## Ten Things You Need to Know About Cervical Cancer

1. Cervical cancer is almost 100 percent preventable. It is not hereditary like some other cancers. You can take steps to protect yourself against it.
2. Almost all cervical cancer – over 93 percent – is caused by a virus known as HPV. The virus is transmitted via skin-to-skin sexual contact. Condoms do not completely eliminate the risk of getting HPV.
3. HPV is very common. It is estimated that approximately 80 percent of Americans will be exposed to the virus in their lifetimes.
4. The surest way to prevent cervical cancer and other cancers caused by HPV is vaccination for girls and boys starting at age nine before they become sexually active and when their immune response is at its strongest. Boys should get vaccinated against the virus because it can also cause cancers in men related to sexual activity. And, men can transmit HPV to their sexual partners.
5. The HPV vaccine is safe despite anti-vaccine scare stories on the Internet. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has determined the vaccine is a safe and effective way to guard against a variety of the most common strains of HPV that cause cancer.
6. In addition to vaccination, women should get regular, high-quality Pap smear screens starting at age 21. Pap tests can detect pre-cancerous changes in the cervix that could lead to cancer if left untreated.
7. You don't have to have a lot of sexual partners to be exposed to HPV. About 40 percent of young women with only one sexual partner get HPV within two years of becoming sexually active get infected with HPV. Nearly everyone is exposed to the virus at some stage in their life.
8. HPV takes a long time to cause cancer and sometimes it is hidden in the body and only becomes active many years (up to 20 years) after it first entered your body, so older women still need to get regular cervical cancer screens. 41% of women who die from cervical cancer are over age 65.
9. Providing equitable access to high-quality diagnostics and treatment can address racial disparities in cervical cancer outcomes and improve outcomes for *all* women.
10. Several countries have made significant advances toward eradicating cervical cancer. Australia says it will eliminate the disease by 2028. Rwanda has succeeded in getting 94 percent of its adolescents fully vaccinated within three years. **Join the campaign to eradicate cervical cancer in Chicago!**

*Uniting to End Health Disparities*