

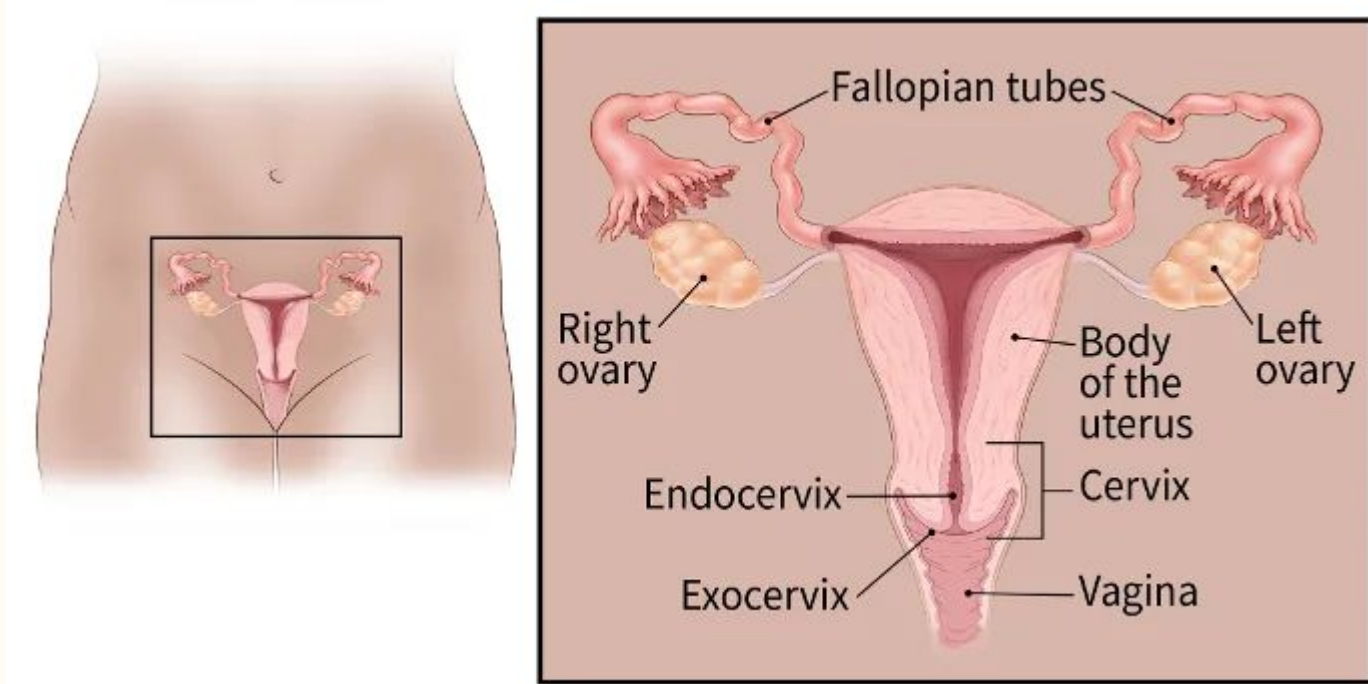
# Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

January 2026



# What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer is a cancer that starts in the cells of the cervix. The cervix is the lower, narrow end of the uterus (womb) that connects the uterus to the vagina (birth canal).



# Types of Cervical Cancer

- Squamous cell carcinoma- most common form, begins in the exocervix.
- Adenocarcinoma- arises in the endocervix
- Adenosquamous carcinoma or mixed carcinomas- less common, has both features
- Other kinds that can develop but less likely: melanoma, sarcoma, and lymphoma which usually occur in other parts of the body but still can occur here.

# Signs and Symptoms of Cervical Cancer

Abnormal vaginal bleeding, such as:

- ◇ bleeding after vaginal sex
  - ◇ bleeding after menopause
  - ◇ spotting between periods
  - ◇ menstrual periods that are longer or heavier than usual.
- Unusual discharge from the vagina.
  - Pain during sex.
  - Pain in the pelvic region.

# What can increase your risk of Cervical Cancer

- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
- Sexual History/Sexual Behaviors
- Smoking
- Birth Control pill and childbearing history
- Obesity
- Family History of Cervical Cancer
- Weakened immune System

# Steps to lower your risk of Cervical Cancer

- Get your pap smears
  - Early detection, reduced mortality, treatment options
- Get the HPV vaccine
- Use condoms during sex
- Do NOT smoke
- Limit the amount of sexual partners you have

## Cervical Cancer Screening Tests

- The Pap Test (pap smear/cervical cytology)
- HPV Tests
- The HPV/Pap co-test
- NEW: self swab for HPV (not cervical cancer)

# Self Swab collection for HPV

- Ask your health care provider if this is an option for you. They will be the one to order the test if it is appropriate for your care.
- The test can be collected in a health clinic/office or at home (at home test are limited at this time)
- You use a long cotton swab to collect a sample from your vagina.

# Why would someone want to self collect?

- Trouble getting to exams
- Anxiety about having a pelvic exam
- Pain or discomfort during pelvic exams
- History of sexual trauma
- Culture or religious beliefs
- Gender identity
- Transportation, time constraints, or other barriers to travelling for screening.

# Who should get tested

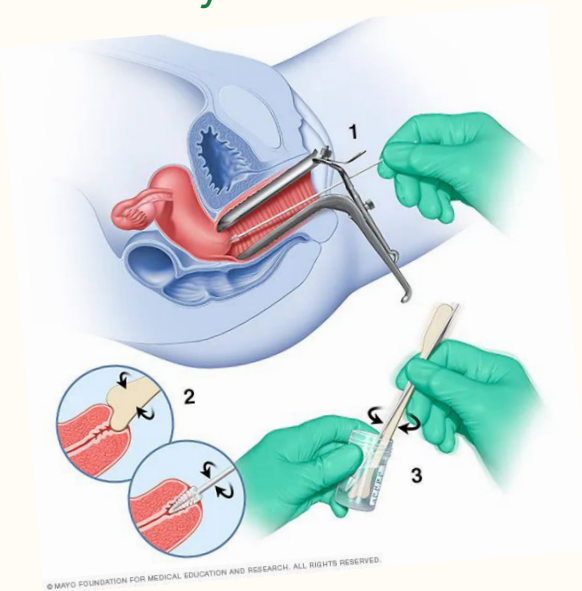
- Women aged 21– 29 years: recommended screening for cervical cancer every 3 years with the Pap test alone.
- Women aged 30 to 65 years: recommend getting screened for cervical cancer using one of the following methods:
  - Pap test every 3 years
  - HPV test every 5 years
  - HPV/Pap cotest every 5 years.

# Who should NOT get tested

- Women younger than 21 years (no matter their sexual history unless issues arise)
- Individuals who have had a total hysterectomy (removal of both the uterus and cervix) and do not have a history of a high-grade precancerous lesion (i.e. cervical intraepithelial neoplasia [CIN] grade 2 or 3) or cervical cancer.
- Women older than 65 years who have had adequate prior screening and are not otherwise at high-risk for cervical cancer.

# What to expect when getting a Pap smear

- Provider will ask additional questions such as:
  - Are you on your period?
  - When did you last have sexual intercourse? (no sexual activity for 24-48 hrs before pap for best results as it can affect results.)
- Instruments used:
  - Speculum
  - Brush
  - Spatula
- Results get sent to lab



# Cervical Cancer Statistics in Maryland

## Cervical Cancer Statistics in Maryland:

- According to the American Cancer Society, it is estimated that in 2024:
  - ◇ About 230 new cases of invasive cervical cancer will have been diagnosed in Maryland residents.
  - ◇ About 70 Maryland residents will have died from cervical cancer.

**Cervical cancer is preventable and highly curable if diagnosed at an early stage and treated promptly.**

**About 200 Marylanders get diagnosed with cervical cancer every year. Let's get to zero!**

Get screened regularly. Follow-up on any abnormal test results as soon as you can.

The HPV vaccine lowers the risk of cervical cancer.

The HPV vaccine is safe and helps protect against 6 types of cancer.

For more information about the HPV vaccine, talk to your health care provider.



# Cancer Prevention Education Screening Treatment CPEST

## Eligibility

All program participants must:

- Be uninsured or underinsured
- Have limited income
- Be a Maryland resident

**Mammograms & Breast Exams: Ages 40 – 64**

**Cervical Exams & PAP Tests: Ages 21 – 64**

**Colonoscopies: Age 45+ (or under 45 with family history and/or symptoms)**

## CPEST Team:

- Caitlin Kirkpatrick, BSN, RN
  - CPEST Program Supervisor
  - [Caitlin.Kirkpatrick@maryland.gov](mailto:Caitlin.Kirkpatrick@maryland.gov)
  - 301-475-4074
- Nancy Stone
  - CPEST program administrator
  - [Nancy.Stone@maryland.gov](mailto:Nancy.Stone@maryland.gov)
  - 301-475-4371

