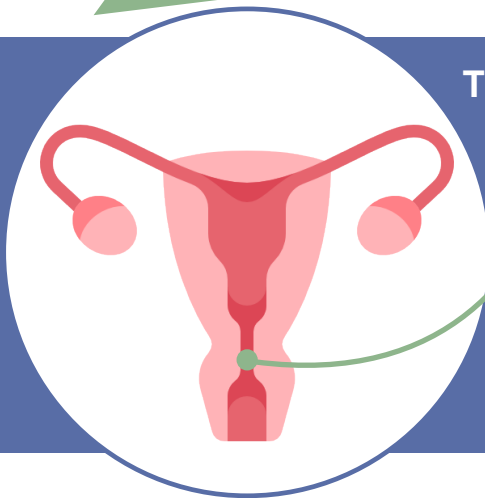


# LET'S TALK ABOUT CERVICAL CANCER



The cervix is the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina, serving as a passage between them.

Cervical cancer happens when abnormal cells on the cervix grow out of control. It can take over 10 years to develop and often has no early symptoms, but regular screenings can detect it early and make it highly preventable.

**Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)** is the **main cause** of cervical cancer.

HPV is a common virus spread through skin-to-skin contact, and sexual activity, with nearly **70%** of people exposed to it at some point in their lives. Most HPV infections go away naturally, but some are persistent and can cause changes to cervical cells that might lead to cancer.



## RISKS FACTORS

- HPV Infection
- Multiple Sexual Partners
- Smoking & Secondhand Smoke
- Weakened Immune System
- Long-term Use of Hormonal Birth Control
- Multiple Births

## WARNING SIGNS



- Abnormal Vaginal Bleeding (between periods, after menopause, or after sex)
- Abnormal or Increased Vaginal Discharge
- Unusually Heavy or Long Periods
- Pain During Intercourse
- Pelvic Pain

## TIPS TO LOWER YOUR RISK OF CERVICAL CANCER



- 1 HPV Vaccine:** Protect yourself with the HPV vaccine, which is free for many individuals - ask your healthcare provider.
- 2 Screening:** Pap tests detect abnormal cells. Recommended for those aged 25-70, who have been sexually active.
- 3 Practice Safe Sex:** Use condoms or other barriers to reduce the risk of HPV. Regular screenings are still necessary for protection as condoms/barriers do not fully cover the skin.
- 4 Avoid Smoking:** Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of cervical cancer.

Source: Nova Scotia Health, Cancer Care Program | <https://www.nshealth.ca/clinics-programs-and-services/cervical-cancer-prevention-program>