

WHAT ARE CANCER SCREENINGS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Cancer Screening is the process of checking for cancer cells that are present - or abnormal cells that could become cancer - often before symptoms appear.

The **goal of screening** is to detect cancer early, or prevent it from starting, which can lead to better treatment outcomes and higher survival rates.

These routine, preventive tests **can - and do - save lives.**

TYPES OF CERVICAL CANCER SCREENINGS

Approximately **90% of cervical cancer cases** are caused by **human papillomavirus (HPV)** - a group of more than 200 viruses that are spread by skin-to-skin contact. Screening for HPV is important because oftentimes, this virus will not present with any symptoms, but those infected can still - and unknowingly - pass on the virus.

- **Pap Smear / Pap Test** - The most common screening is the **Pap smear** (Pap test). Using a speculum, a doctor collects cells from inside the cervix, which is the bottom part of the uterus. The cells are sent to a lab for examination to see if there any abnormalities.
- **HPV Test** - an HPV test detects for the presence of the **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)** in cervical cells. Like the pap test, a doctor collects cells from inside the cervix for a lab to exam. It detects the presence of the virus in cervical cells to identify individuals at risk for developing cancer.

HPV VACCINATION

The HPV vaccine (Gardasil 9) is series of 2 or 3 shots that protects against nine types of HPV. The recommendation is that **all preteens - boys and girls** - should get their first dose at **age 11 or 12**, but can start as early as age 9.

Studies show that even if your teen is not sexually active, getting the HPV vaccine early creates a strong immune response to fight infection later.

SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CERVICAL CANCER

Screening recommendations may depend on your family history and risk factors.

- **Pap smears** are recommended for **women starting at age 21**. That is the same recommendation for **all people assigned female at birth**.
- **Note:** Vaccinated individuals should still follow the screening guidelines.

ABOUT US

Our mission is to reach **all** people impacted by cancer - those diagnosed, their loved ones, and caregivers - so that **no one** faces cancer alone.

All our programs and services are **FREE** to our members.