

# Cervical Cancer

## *Early Detection Saves Lives*

### What is the cervix?

The cervix is the lowest part of the uterus (where a baby grows) and connects the uterus to the vagina, or birth canal.

### What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer develops when cells in the cervix grow out of control and invade other tissues in the body.

### What are the risk factors?

One of the most important risk factors is infection with a virus called HPV (human papillomavirus). HPV is a sexually transmitted virus that is very common, especially among college-aged men and women.

### What are the signs of cervical cancer?

Unfortunately, the early stages of cervical cancer don't have symptoms; therefore, it's critical for women to get annual Pap tests. As the cancer progresses, symptoms include:

- Vaginal bleeding at odd times (after sex, between periods, after menopause, etc.)
- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- Pelvic or back pain
- Pain during urination
- Blood in the stool or urine

### How can I prevent cervical cancer?

One way to prevent cervical cancer is to undergo regular Pap testing during your annual gynecological exam. Another form of prevention is a vaccine that can be given to young women before they become infected with HPV. Ask your doctor for more details.

### How is cervical cancer diagnosed?

Cervical cancer is usually discovered through an abnormal Pap test. For this reason, **it's recommended that women visit their gynecologist every year for a routine Pap test.**

### How can I schedule an exam?

Contact the Institute for Women's Health by calling **1.877.41WOMAN**.