



womenshealth.gov

1-800-994-9662

TDD: 1-888-220-5446

# Cervical Cancer

**Q: What is cervical cancer?**

**A:** Cancer is a disease in which certain body cells don't function right, divide very fast, and produce too much tissue that forms a tumor. Cervical cancer is cancer in the cervix, the lower, narrow part of the uterus (womb). The uterus is the hollow, pear-shaped organ where a baby grows during a woman's pregnancy. The cervix forms a canal that opens into the vagina (birth canal), which leads to the outside of the body.

If the Pap test finds serious changes in the cells of the cervix, the doctor will suggest more powerful tests such as a coloscopy. In this procedure, the doctor uses a tool called a colposcope to see the cells of the vagina and cervix in detail.

If there are still some concerns of precancerous cells, the doctor may use the LUMA Cervical Imaging System. The doctor uses this device right after a colposcopy. This system, recently approved by the FDA, shines a light on the cervix and looks at how different areas of the cervix respond to this light. It gives a score to tiny areas of the cervix. It then makes a color map that helps the doctor decide where to further test the tissue with a biopsy. The colors and patterns on the map help the doctor tell between healthy tissue and tissue that might be diseased.

**Q: Why should I be concerned about cervical cancer?**

**A:** Cervical cancer is a disease that can be very serious. However, it is a disease

that you can help prevent. Cervical cancer occurs when normal cells in the cervix change into cancer cells. This normally takes several years to happen, but it can also happen in a very short period of time. The good news is that there are ways to help prevent cervical cancer. By getting regular Pap tests and pelvic exams, your health care provider can find and treat the changing cells before they turn into cancer.

If the Pap test finds more serious changes in the cells of the cervix, the doctor will suggest more powerful tests such as a coloscopy. The doctor uses a tool called a colposcope to see the cells of the vagina and cervix in detail. The FDA recently approved the LUMA Cervical Imaging System. This system can help doctors see areas on the cervix that are likely to contain precancerous cells. The doctor uses this device right after a colposcopy. This system shines a light on the cervix and looks at how different areas of the cervix respond to this light. It gives a score to tiny areas of the cervix. It then makes a color map that helps the doctor decide where to further test the tissue with a biopsy. The colors and patterns on the map help the doctor tell between healthy tissue and tissue that might be diseased.

**Q: Where can I learn more about cervical cancer?**

**A:** The National Cancer Institute (NCI) is the federal government's authority on cervical cancer. Contact them at 800-4-CANCER (800-422-6237) or go to the following web site: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo/wyntk/cervix> ■



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### *For More Information...*

You can also find out more about cervical cancer by contacting the National Women's Health Information Center 1-800-994-9662 or the following organizations:

**National Cancer Institute**

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccines  
for Cervical Cancer

Phone: (800) 422-6237

Internet Address: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/hpv-vaccines>

**National Cancer Institute  
Cancer Information Service**

Phone: (800) 422-6237

Internet Address: <http://cis.nci.nih.gov>

**National Breast and Cervical Cancer  
Early Detection Program**

Phone: (888)-842-6355 (select option 7)

Internet Address: <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/index.htm>

**American Cancer Society**

Phone: (800)-ACS-2345

Internet Address: <http://www.cancer.org>

**Gynecologic Cancer Foundation**

Phone: (800) 444-4441

Internet Address: <http://www.wcn.org/gcf>

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