

The 7 Things You Should Know About Cervical Cancer



(NAPSA)—**1. All women are at risk.**

Unless you have had your cervix removed for noncancerous conditions (like fibroids), you can develop cervical cancer, which is caused by abnormal cell growth.

2. Black women with cervical cancer die at a higher rate.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, black women have more than twice the mortality rate of white women. Unfortunately, most of these deaths occur in women who have never been screened or have not been screened in the past five years. The Black Women's Health Imperative advocates that when found early, cervical cancer is highly curable.

3. Your Pap test screens for cervical cancer.

The Pap test is the most effective way to find and prevent cervical cancer. In addition to screening for cervical cancer, the Pap test looks for cell changes (precancers) that can be treated before escalating to cancer. Your health and peace of mind will more than make up for the minor effort it takes to get tested.

4. HPV is almost always the cause.

The human papillomavirus (HPV) has over 150 strains and is transmitted by skin-to-skin contact—usually through sex. HPV can infect cells, causing genital warts and even cervical cancer. If you are found to have

HPV, don't panic. HPV is actually quite common—most women (and men) will have it at some point. Usually, HPV is non-threatening and goes away on its own; however, it can cause cervical and other types of cancers. Your doctor can test for HPV during your exam.

5. There is an HPV vaccine but...

The HPV vaccine has been shown to reduce the risk of HPV in women under 27 when administered properly; however, the vaccine only protects against the two most common strains that cause HPV and genital warts. Even if you have been vaccinated, you should still see your doctor for routine Pap tests.

6. You may not have symptoms.

Women with cervical cancer may not show any signs early on. In more advanced stages, cervical cancer can cause abnormal bleeding or discharge from the vagina, such as bleeding after sex. If you have any of these symptoms, you should see your doctor.

7. Smokers have a higher risk.

Women who smoke cigarettes are more susceptible to developing cervical cancer.

For more information, visit the Imperative at www.bwhi.org and, on Facebook and Twitter, www.twitter.com/blkwomenshealth and www.facebook.com/pages/Black-Womens-Health-Imperative/124529610935724.