



# UNDERSTANDING #CERVICALCANCER

## WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?



Cervical cancer is a cancer that occurs in the cell of the cervix, which is located in the lower part of the womb that connects to the vagina. In South Africa, there are 5 743 new cases reported annually. Cervical cancer is the second largest cancer affecting women in South Africa.

Over 70% of cervical cancers are caused by a virus called HPV or Human Papilloma Virus. HPV is spread through body fluids and unprotected sexual intercourse. By ensuring you have protected sex and regular screening, you can reduce your risk of contracting HPV.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM THE HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV):

### 1. Delay sex debut until late teens

The only way to be completely sure about preventing HPV infections and other STDs is to not have sex. The younger you are when you start having sex, the greater your risk for acquiring an HPV infection if you are exposed to the virus. The age group with the highest prevalence of HPV infection is between ages 15 and 25. There's no way to know whether a prospective partner who is sexually experienced has HPV. If you're going to have sex at a young age, the best way to protect yourself is to get vaccinated first.

### 2. Get vaccinated against HPV

There is a vaccine that provides protection against HPV that is responsible for almost all cases of cervical cancer. Vaccination is available for girls ages 9 to 12. The vaccine is most effective if given to girls before they become sexually active. This is the most effective way to prevent this cancer.

### 3. Practise safe sex

Using a condom during sexual intercourse will reduce your risk of being infected with HPV and spreading it to others.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CERVICAL CANCER

- Bleeding between regular menstrual days
- Heavier and longer menstrual periods than usual
- Bleeding after sexual intercourse
- Pelvic pain and lower back pain not related to your menstrual cycle
- Bleeding after menses have stopped for a period of a year or more
- Continuous heavy or unusual discharge that may be watery, brown, thick and possibly has a smelly odour
- Pain during intercourse
- Presence of genital and vaginal warts

**CERVICAL CANCER IS PREVENTABLE AND TREATABLE WHEN DETECTED EARLY.**



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MORE?**

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#HPV #CervicalCancer

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