



What You Need to Know About
CERVICAL CANCER
and its Prevention



Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health
Republic of Zambia

What is Cervical Cancer?

The cervix is the lower part of the womb that connects to the vagina. Cervical Cancer is a serious disease in the cervix. It's the most common cancer in Zambia and many women die from it.

What causes cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is caused by **Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)**, which is transmitted through sex.

Who is at risk for HPV infection?

Anyone who has sex is at risk of getting an HPV infection. While both boys and girls can get HPV infections, it is only girls who develop cervical cancer later on in their lives.

What other diseases does HPV cause?

HPV causes other cancers, including cancer of the penis, mouth, throat, vulva, vagina, and anus. HPV also causes genital warts, which are common.

How can you tell that you have HPV?

A person who has HPV infection often doesn't see or feel anything. It is **IMPORTANT** for women to go for regular checkups because HPV can take up to 20 years to develop into cervical cancer.

How can cervical cancer be prevented?

1. The best way is to get **the HPV vaccine**.
2. Go for regular cervical cancer screening.
3. While lifelong abstinence can prevent HPV infections, condoms can reduce the risk of getting HPV.



The HPV Vaccine

The HPV vaccine is now available in Lusaka, Kafue, and Chongwe districts. Plans are underway to introduce it to the rest of the country.

How does the vaccine work and who should get it?

The HPV vaccine prevents young girls from getting HPV infections and developing cervical cancer or genital warts later in life. All girl pupils in grade 4 should receive the vaccine at their school. 10 year old girls who are not attending school can also receive the vaccine at the nearest clinic or health post.

How is the HPV vaccine given and how many times?

The vaccine is given as an injection in the left upper arm. For a girl to be fully protected, she **MUST** receive 3 doses of HPV vaccine. The 2nd dose should be given 2 months after the 1st dose, and the 3rd dose should be given 4 months after the 2nd.

Is the HPV vaccine safe?

Yes. The vaccine is safe and it works. The Government of Zambia has approved the vaccine and it is being used in more than 50 other countries. However, as with any injection, a girl may experience pain, itching, or swelling at the site of the injected arm after injection.

Stay Protected!

All Grade 4 girls should get the HPV vaccine against cervical cancer from their schools.

All women who have ever had sex before should go for cervical cancer screening.

Get Treatment!

Cervical cancer often has no signs or symptoms. However, women with the following symptoms may have cervical cancer:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding (after sex, between menstruation periods, or after menopause)
- Bad smelling discharge from the vagina that is watery, yellowish, pink, or brown
- Pain in the back or leg