

RESOURCE FROM:

**Cervical cancer screening and treatment in low-resource settings:**  
PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE FROM PATH

PUBLICATION TITLE

# Cervical Cancer Screening Brochure

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[www.rho.org/HPV-screening-treatment.htm](http://www.rho.org/HPV-screening-treatment.htm)

## WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?

This is a condition where there is uncontrolled growth of some cells in the mouth of the womb (cervix). The cancer begins from the outer area of the cervix, and spreads to other organs interfering with normal body functions.

It spreads slowly and all this time you may not experience any pain, or irregular bleeding. By the time you start experiencing pain and bleeding, the disease will have already spread to other parts of the body making it difficult to treat. Cervical cancer is caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). This virus is commonly transmitted through sexual intercourse. It is the commonest cancer affecting and killing many women. However, it can be prevented and treated if detected early.



## WHAT CONDITIONS INCREASE CHANCES OF DEVELOPING CERVICAL CANCER?

-Engaging in sexual intercourse at an early age, (18 yrs and below).

-A woman or her partner having multiple sexual partners,

-Giving many births,

-Having the first pregnancy at young age (below 18 yrs).

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE A WOMAN WHO HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) TO DEVELOP CERVICAL CANCER?

It takes about 10 to 15 years to develop cervical cancer. This gives health workers an opportunity to detect and treat the early changes that can lead to cervical cancer. (In cases of low immunity as in HIV infection this period may be shorter).

## DOES EVERYONE WITH HPV INFECTION EVENTUALLY DEVELOP CERVICAL CANCER?

No, not everybody who has been exposed to HPV will develop cancer of the cervix. Some women are able to fight the infection naturally but we cannot know whose body will be able to fight off the infection. Remember, there are no symptoms we can't tell who has the HPV infection or not. This is why we must screen everyone.

## IF AM IN GOOD HEALTH, SHOULD I GO FOR SCREENING?

Yes. You may appear to be in good health even when your cervix is experiencing abnormal changes. These changes do not necessarily create

pain or discomfort. The health worker can only confirm that your cervix has undergone abnormal changes through an examination done at the health facility using the Pap smear or vinegar test.

## HOW THEN CAN I AVOID GETTING CERVICAL CANCER?

- You should avoid multiple sexual partners and getting involved with partners with many sexual contacts.
- You should avoid sexual intercourse at early age,
- You should use condoms to prevent sexually transmitted infections.
- You should avoid having many births by using birth control methods.
- You should go for cervical cancer screening at least once every 3 years.
- If the early signs are found, treatment will be provided to prevent progression into cancer.
- Young people who are not sexually active or women who don't have HPV infection should receive HPV vaccine.

## WHO SHOULD GO FOR CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING?

All women aged 25 years and above, especially those who have been sexually active, must go to a health facility for screening to make sure their cervix is healthy. It is in this age group that the cervix is likely to develop abnormal changes.

## HOW IS THE SCREENING DONE?

The health provider will examine you in privacy at the health facility. You will be required to remove

your undergarments and lie on the examination table.

The health provider will insert a speculum into your birth canal to open it up. He/ she will then wipe the cervix with cotton soaked in vinegar and inspect it using a light source. Depending on what the cervix looks like the health provider will give the appropriate management. A Pap smear test or biopsy may also be taken depending on the health facility.

### **DOES ONE EXPERIENCE PAIN DURING EXAMINATION?**

Usually no. You may only experience a slight discomfort. The examination takes a very short time and is not painful.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE EXAMINATION?**

The clinician will tell you his/her findings and advise you on the next step.

If your cervix is healthy you will not be required to visit the health facility for examination until after three (3) years, when you are expected to repeat the test.

If changes are observed on the cervix you will be advised to go for further examination at the referral hospital. You should not panic as this does not necessarily mean you have cancer. **IF AM PREGNANT, CAN I GO FOR SCREENING?**

Yes. Screening can be done up to 05 months of pregnancy and at 6 weeks after delivery. You should therefore, always ask your health providers for more information on cervical cancer screening at the earliest available opportunity.

## **.REMEMBER!!**

**Prevent cervical cancer  
by being screened early.**

**If you are older than 25  
Years, go for screening  
NOW!!!**

**For More information about this publication  
or ordering extra copies;**

**Please contact:**

**Reproductive Health Division  
Ministry of Health  
P. O. Box 7272,  
Kampala,  
Uganda.**

### **DETAILS FOR REFERRAL:**

Client's Names:.....

Health Facility:.....

Date of  
screening:.....

Time: .....

Health worker's Name:.....

Invitation Number: .....



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**



# **YOU CAN PREVENT CERVICAL CANCER**

**By going for screening  
NOW!!!**