

PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR LOVED ONES, AND YOUR COMMUNITY FROM A PREVENTABLE CANCER

Alabama has one of the highest death rates from cervical cancer in the U.S., even though this is one of the few cancers that can be eliminated.

We can wipe out cervical cancer through three simple steps:

1



HPV VACCINE

Give the HPV
vaccination to
children and
young adults
aged 9-26

2



SCREENING

Get regular
HPV/Pap test to
screen for
cervical cancer
beginning at
age 21

3



FOLLOW-UP/ TREATMENT

If your HPV/Pap
test is abnormal,
go back to your
doctor/health
care provider for
a follow-up
appointment

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What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is a cancer of the cervix, which is part of the female organs.

How serious is cervical cancer?

It is a devastating cancer that can not only impact a woman's life but also her entire family and community. Many women have cervical cancer in their 30s, 40s, and 50s, which is younger than the onset of many other cancers.

The good news is that this cancer can be **prevented**.

Who is at risk for cervical cancer?

Every person who has a cervix (lower, narrow part of the uterus). This includes individuals with no family history of cancer.

What causes cervical cancer?

The Human Papillomavirus, or HPV, causes nearly all cervical cancers. There are several types of HPV. HPV is a very common virus, and for most people, it goes away by itself. It only becomes a problem if the virus persists for many years and causes changes to the affected cells. If not detected and treated, these cells can become cancerous.



Does cervical cancer have any symptoms?

Not early on. Usually when a woman starts having symptoms, it is because the cancer is already advanced. So it is important to be screened regularly before symptoms appear.



How can we prevent cervical cancer?

We have two major tools to prevent cervical cancer: **HPV vaccination** and **cervical cancer screening**. Also, timely follow-up is critical if any abnormalities are found during screening.

HPV causes others cancers among men and women besides cervical cancer.

While the most common HPV-associated cancer among women is cervical cancer, oropharyngeal cancers (cancers of the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils) are the most common HPV-associated cancers among men. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that roughly 45% of the HPV-associated cancers between 2015-2019 occurred in men. It is estimated that over 90% of anal cancers, 60% of penile cancers, and 70% of vaginal or vulvar cancers are caused by HPV.




HPV VACCINATION

There is a vaccine that can prevent HPV infection, and, consequently, can prevent cervical and other HPV-associated cancers. The HPV vaccine is very safe and covered by most health insurance plans or the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program for those who qualify. Ask your child's health care provider or contact your local health department.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is most effective when children are vaccinated BEFORE they are exposed to the virus. It is recommended for all boys and girls ages 9 to 26. Adults ages 27-45 can also receive the HPV vaccine based on a discussion with their health care provider.



CHILDREN	ADOLESCENTS	ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS
 9-12 years of age	 Between 13 and 14 years of age	 Between 15 and 26 years of age
2 DOSES	2 DOSES	3 DOSES
The earlier a child receives the HPV vaccine, the better!		

How well does the HPV vaccine work?

The HPV vaccine works extremely well. Studies show that this vaccine provides almost 100% protection against the types of HPV it targets.

Is the HPV vaccine safe?

The HPV vaccine went through years of extensive safety testing before being licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA only licenses a vaccine if it is safe, effective, and the benefits significantly outweigh the risks. Since its approval, over 15 years of monitoring and research have continued to show that the HPV vaccine is very safe.



How much does the HPV vaccine cost?

Most health insurance plans cover the HPV vaccine. The VFC program also provides vaccines for children ages 18 years and younger who are uninsured or whose health insurance does not pay for the vaccine, Medicaid-eligible children, and American Indian/Alaska Natives.

CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING

Regular cervical cancer screening is recommended for women between 21-65 years. Often, women put off getting screened for several reasons: fear, shame, procrastination, lack of time, etc. They are afraid of the results because they do not want to know if they have cancer. However, the purpose of screening is to detect changes **BEFORE** it turns into cancer, and thus, **PREVENTING** disease.

Most health insurance plans cover cervical cancer screening. The Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program covers screening and follow-up among women who qualify for the program:

<https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/bandc/>

What if the screening test comes back positive?

Women should not panic. They should follow up as recommended by their health care provider. Remember that the screening can detect changes in the cervix **BEFORE** it turns into cancer. So, it is possible that the health care provider will only follow these changes more frequently and/or treat them.

Prevention of cervical cancer is in our hands:

On May of 2023, Alabama launched a statewide plan to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem.

Every child vaccinated against HPV infection and every woman who stays up-to-date on cervical cancer screening not only reduces the risk to themselves and their families. They play an important role in ending this preventable cancer throughout Alabama for generations to come!

For more information on HPV and cancer, as well as facts on screening and vaccine, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/index.html> or <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical/index.html>



OPERATION WIPE OUT is a partnership of several organizations working to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem in Alabama. It will take everyone's effort, but it is totally within our reach. For more information, visit www.operationwipeout.org



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