

# WHITE PAPER

## Cervical Cancer- A slow growing cancer!!

***This fact sheet provides concise information on cervical cancer.***

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that affects a woman's cervix. The cervix plays a vital role in the female reproductive system. Cervical cancer develops when cells in the cervix begin to grow out of control and can then invade nearby tissues or spread throughout the body. Usually, cervix cancer is very slow growing, although in certain circumstances it can grow and spread quickly. It is not a hereditary cancer that develops as a result of a genetic mutation (unlike breast, prostate and ovarian cancer).

The cells that they originally form from characterize Cancers. The most common type of cervical cancer is called squamous cell carcinoma; it comes from cells that lie on the surface of the cervix known as squamous cells. Squamous cell cervical cancer comprises about 80% of all cervical cancers. The second most common form is adenocarcinoma; it comes from cells that make up glands in the cervix.

### ***Facts & Figures:***

- A woman can be infected with HPV at a young age but not develop cervical cancer for many years because it generally takes awhile for the disease to progress.
- The highest burden of diagnosis of cervical cancer is among women aged 35 to 44. Cervical cancer is extremely rare in women under the age of 20.
- It affects an estimated 490,000 women worldwide each year & leads to more than 270,000 deaths-fact given by PATH Organization.
- Every year, almost 74,000 women die due to cervical cancer in India. More than 130,000 Indian women are diagnosed with it every year. According to statistics, every hour 8 women in India die due to cervical cancer.

### **SYMPTOMS:**

Cervical cancer symptoms often go unnoticed because they mimic so many other ailments. Many women pass these symptoms off as PMS or ovulation pains. Many times, however, cervical cancer has no symptoms.

When symptoms are present, they usually do not appear until the cancer is more advanced. This does vary from woman to woman.

- Abnormal bleeding -(including bleeding after sexual intercourse, in between periods, heavier/longer lasting menstrual bleeding, or bleeding after menopause)

- Pelvic pain- Pelvic pain that is not related to the normal menstrual cycle can be a cervical cancer symptom.
- Unusual heavy discharge- An increased vaginal discharge is also a symptom of cervical cancer.
- Pain during urination- Bladder pain or pain during urination can be a symptom of advanced cervical cancer. This cervical cancer symptom usually occurs when cancer has spread to the bladder.
- Blood in the stool or urine.

Many of these symptoms are non-specific, and could represent a variety of different conditions. Refer to your doctor if any of these problems persist.

#### **PREVENTION:**

Pap smear Exam- Get a regular Pap smear. It is considered one of the most reliable tests for identifying precancerous or cancerous cells in the cervix. It is performed on a regular basis in order to detect the cell changes that come before cancer.

Gardasil Vaccine- A cervical cancer vaccine for girls and women aged 9 to 26 is approved. Gardasil is highly effective in protecting against the cervical cancer-causing strains of the HPV virus.

Quit smoking- Smoking increases the risk of developing cervical cancer.

Get the HPV vaccine- The HPV vaccine protects against the virus that causes almost all cervical cancers. Women under 27 years are eligible to get the HPV vaccine.

Follow up on abnormal Pap smears- It is important to follow up with regular Pap smear. If you have had an abnormal Pap smear, visit your doctor for treatment.

#### **CAUSE & RISK FACTOR:**

- Human papillomavirus or HPV- is the current leading cause of cervical cancer. HPV is a common sexually transmitted infection that is spread through sexual, skin-to-skin contact. The virus can cause changes in cervical cells that could develop into cervical cancer if left undetected, unmonitored, or untreated.
- Pap test history- Not having regular Pap tests increases the chance of unrecognized cervical cancer.
- Tobacco use- Women who smoke are about twice as likely to develop cervical cancer as women who do not.
- Weak immune system- A woman whose immune system is weak has a higher risk of developing cervical lesions that can become cancerous.
- Eating habits- A diet that doesn't include ample amounts of fruits and vegetables can increase a woman's risk of developing cervical cancer.

#### **TREATMENT:**

There are several different treatment options for patients with cervical cancer. The most common are surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, and in some cases the use of two or more methods works best.

Surgery-There are several different types of surgery used to remove abnormal cells, depending upon whether the cells are precancerous or invasive.

Chemotherapy- Treatment consists of a single drug or combination of drugs, given orally or by injection, to kill cancer cells. Once the drug or drugs enter the bloodstream they spread throughout the body.

Radiation- This treatment involves the use of high-energy radiation from an external or internal source to kill or shrink cancer cells.

### **SOME MYTHS ABOUT CERVICAL CANCER:**

- Myth: HPV is Uncommon- Fact: HPV is extremely common. It is estimated that over 20 million people are infected with HPV in the U.S
- Myth: If You Have HPV, You Will Develop Cervical Cancer- Fact: For most women with HPV, the virus goes away on its own without medical intervention and without causing cervical cancer. Aside from an untreated/unmonitored high-risk HPV infection, there are many factors that play a role in the development of cervical cancer.
- Myth: Cervical Cancer Cannot Be Prevented- Fact: It is one of the most preventable types of cancer. A highly effective means of cervical cancer prevention is regular Pap smear testing.
- Myth: All Women Need an Annual Pap smear to Screen for Cervical Cancer- Fact: While this used to be true, updated cervical cancer screening guidelines do not require all women to have a Pap smear yearly. Frequency of testing depends on age, previous test results, and when a woman becomes sexually active.
- Myth: Cervical Cancer Only Occurs in Developing Countries- Fact: Cervical cancer is a disease that plagues women in all countries, developed or not. Cervical cancer is more prevalent in less developed countries due to the lack of adequate cervical cancer screening programs.

### Sources:

<http://cancer.about.com/od/cervicalcancer/a/cervcancrsympt.htm>,  
<http://cervicalcancer.about.com/od/cervicalcancerbasics/tp/myths.htm>,  
<http://www.oncolink.org/types/article.cfm?c=6&s=17&s>

### Prevention by VACCINATION:

MSD Pharmaceuticals (India), the local affiliate of Merck & Co., Inc USA launched **Gardasil** a quadrivalent human papillomavirus vaccine.

Gardasil is the only vaccine that helps protect against 4 types – types 6, 11, 16, 18 – of HPV. The vaccine helps prevent diseases such as cervical cancer; abnormal and precancerous cervical lesions, vaginal lesions, vulvar lesions; and genital warts, caused by these types of HPV.

s=129&id=8226&p=2,http://www.nocervicalcancer.org/hpv\_cc\_fa  
qs.html