



Cervical Cancer Prevention: A Comprehensive Guide to Protecting Your Health

Department of Health*

Risk Factors: Understanding and addressing risk factors, such as smoking, multiple sexual partners, and a weakened immune system, are key to reducing the likelihood of developing cervical cancer.

Understanding Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer primarily develops in the cervix, the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina. It is most often caused by persistent infections with high-risk strains of the human papillomavirus (HPV). While HPV is common and usually harmless, certain strains can lead to cervical cancer over time [6]. Therefore, understanding the link between HPV and cervical cancer is crucial in prevention efforts.

HPV Vaccination

One of the most effective ways to prevent cervical cancer is through HPV vaccination. Vaccines like Gardasil and Cervarix protect against the most common cancer-causing HPV strains [7]. These vaccines are typically administered in two to three doses to individuals aged 9 to 45. The vaccination is most effective when given before sexual activity begins, as it prevents infection with the most common cancer-causing HPV strains. However, it can still be beneficial for individuals who have already been exposed to the virus, as it may protect against other high-risk HPV types.

Regular Screenings

Regular cervical cancer screenings are essential in early detection and prevention. Pap smears and HPV tests are commonly used to detect precancerous changes or the presence of HPV. The American Cancer Society recommends the following screening guidelines:

- Cervical cytology (Pap smear) starting at age 21, repeated every three years for women aged 21-29.
- Co-testing with cervical cytology and HPV testing every five years for women aged 30-65.
- Women aged 65 and older who have had regular screenings with normal results may discontinue screening.
- These screenings help identify precancerous changes early, allowing for timely intervention and preventing the progression to cervical cancer.

Safe Sexual Practices

Engaging in safe sexual practices can reduce the risk of HPV transmission. Condom use can significantly lower the risk, but it doesn't eliminate it entirely because HPV can infect areas not covered by a condom. Additionally, having fewer sexual partners and choosing

æhçæ]~æà^!~c]jæ^É]!^!çj) *â[]c]j)h)hç@^h { æ }æ*^ { ^ }çh[-!^æ]!~É~çæ*^h&!çj&æ]h &æ}&^!ÉçÈ&^!z^!h[-!fÉh]!^* }æ}&^!ææ}âh!^çj^, h[-!çç@^h]jçç^!æç~!^ÉhÖ^}^h&[!hU}&[!h JI KÁHÉFÉÉ

ÍÉÁ Öæáá~&&âçÉÉÁÖæ!•[ççâ ÖÉÁÖ[•j[!ÁÜÉÁÖ[{ ^ }j&â SÉÁÜj&æ!á[!ÖÉÁÇGÉFFDÁÜ { [!â } *Á @æââçÉÉh { { ~ }^!•~ }]!^!••j[]ÉÁ[!æ]h&[]ç!æ&^!çç^!~•^Éhæ}âh@[!{ []^!^!}jæ&^ { ^ }çh ç@^!æ] ^h ~•^!æ}âh&^!çj&æ]h&æ!âj} [*^!^!•!æh!^çj^, h[-!çç@^h]jçç^!æç~!^ÉhÖ^}^h&[!h Ö)â[!â] } [!GÍKÁÍJÍÉÍÉ

ÍÉÁ Tæ!æ:: [!RTÉÁ S~c•^!SÇÉÉ!Sçæç!ç!çÓÉ!S~^!^!•!RTÉÁÜç!^!S!ÇGÉFFDÁÜæ}â&[!æ[~! ç^!ç!&!^!^!} *!æ}âh! !^çæ!^!&^!h[-!^!^!}ççæ]h@~ { æ}h]æ}âj[{ æçâ!~•!æ { [] *!^, [{ ^ }h , @ [!h@æç^!^!ç!^, çç@h, [{ ^ }ÉÇERUPÁJFKAJÍÉJÍÉ

ÍÉÁ T~fi[:!BÉÁÖ[•&@!ÖYÉh!^!hUæ}!{•...!ÜÉhP!^!^! [!ÁÜÉhÖæ•c^!|•æ*~...!YÉh^ç!æ]ÉhÇGÉEHDA Ö)â^ { â[[! *âh &|æ••â, &æç! []! [-!h@~ { æ}h]æ}âj[{ æçâ!~•!ç^!^!^!æ••[!âæç^!âh , çç@h &^!çj&æ]h&æ}&^!ÉhBÖRTÁHÍKÁFÍÉÍÉ

JÉÁ Ö[]!b...!PÜ!ÇGÉÉIDÁÜ&!^!^!} *!^! [!h&^!çj&æ]h&æ} &^!h}h!^çç^! []!} *!h&[~ }ç!z^!Éh}ç!RÁ[-!Á Ö~}æ^h&[!hUâ•c^!ç!h!KÁFÉFÉFÉÉ

FÉÉÁÖj) @ []!}!^!BÉÁV! []!...!ÖÉÁÜjââ^!^!^! { !^!TÉÁÖ[{ æ}h SÉÁÜ[!z^!h ÖÉÁ^ç!æ]ÉhÇGÉEHDA ÇÉÁ •^•c^ { æçâ!â[ç^!ç!^, h[-!zæâzæç! []çç@^!æ}~!^!^!ç!h}h&^!çj&æ]h&æ}&^!ÉhÇGÉEHDA ÇÉÁ []! [! IGKÁÍÍÉÍÍÉ