

## Cervical Cancer

Cervical health is one aspect of health that many women neglect throughout their lives. Cervical cancer is predominantly caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which is a very common sexually transmitted infection (STI). Other cancers caused by HPV can be seen in males and females and include anal, vaginal, oropharyngeal, vulvar and penile.

Female incidence rates of cervical cancer are higher in Appalachia, but this disease is not as widely focused on as some other types of cancers. Cervical cancer can be prevented and treatment is highly effective with early diagnosis and treatment. Education about cervical health, vaccination and screening can help to help minimize the occurrence of this preventable cancer.

There are screening tests for HPV and a Pap test that can find cervical cancer early or help prevent it from happening. The HPV test looks for the virus that causes cell changes on the cervix and the Pap test (Pap smear) looks for signs of precancers, which are cell changes on the cervix that could become cervical cancer if not treated appropriately. Starting at the age of 21, women should get Pap tests done. If your test comes back as normal, your healthcare provider may have you wait three years until your next test. If you are between the age of 30-65 years old you have three options of testing and you can speak with your healthcare provider to see which is right for you.

Option 1: You can get an HPV test only. If your test comes back normal your healthcare provider may have you wait five years until your next screening test.

Option 2: You can get a Pap test only. If your results come back normal, your healthcare provider may have you wait three years before your next screening.

Option 3: You could get an HPV test and a pap test. If both results come back normal, your healthcare provider may have you wait five years until your next screening.

If you are over the age of 65, your healthcare provider may tell you that you no longer need a Pap smear if you have had normal test results for several years and not had a cervical precancer in the past or you have had your cervix removed as part of a hysterectomy for non-cancerous conditions like fibroids.

Meanwhile, the HPV vaccine is cancer prevention and helps protect against the types of HPV that most often cause cervical cancers. The HPV vaccine protects against other types of cancer in men and women mentioned above. The HPV vaccination prevents new HPV infections, but it does not treat existing infections or diseases. That's why the HPV vaccine works best when given before any exposure to HPV. The HPV vaccination is recommended for pre-teens that are aged 11-12 years, but can be given starting at the age of 9 years. It also is recommended for

everyone through the age of 26 years, if they have not already been vaccinated. Some adults between the ages of 27- 45 years who are not already vaccinated who want to get the HPV vaccination should speak with their healthcare provider about the risk for new HPV infections and the possible benefits of the vaccination. The vaccination in this age range provides less benefit.

For more information about the HPV vaccine, contact the Meigs County Health Department (MCHD) at (740)992-6626. The vaccine is available at the MCHD. No appointment is necessary Monday-Friday from 8AM-11:45PM or 1:00-3:30PM. Our office is located at 112 E Memorial Dr, Suite A, Pomeroy OH. Please bring your photo ID and health insurance card(s), if applicable.

If you need any women's health services, you should contact your healthcare provider or schedule an appointment with OhioHealth Wellness on Wheels (WOW) at (740)331-7373. WOW visits the MCHD every Tuesday from 9am-3pm. They offer primary care services from 9am- 12pm and women's health services from 1pm-2:30pm. In addition, Ohio University's Community Health Program's also offers services via its Sexual Health & Wellness Clinic. Call 740-592-2432 for an appointment.

If you are un/under insured, the the Southeast Ohio Breast and Cervical Cancer Project (SEOBCCP) might be able to help.

What does SEOBCCP do?

- Provides Screenings: Funds mammograms for breast cancer and Pap/HPV tests for cervical cancer based on age and income guidelines.
- Covers Diagnostics: Offers funding for follow-up diagnostic services if initial screenings are abnormal.
- Serves the Underserved: Aims to reduce health disparities by helping women who might not otherwise be able to afford these essential tests.

In Simple Terms: The SEOBCCP offers vital cancer screenings (mammograms, Pap/HPV tests) and diagnostic services, often free or low-cost, for eligible women in Southeast Ohio to catch breast and cervical cancers early, helping local health departments like MCHD provide crucial preventative care and improve health outcomes. It's a program that helps women in Southeast Ohio get screened for breast and cervical cancer, preventing serious illness and saving lives by making care accessible. The phone number for the SEOBCCP is 1-800-236-6253.

Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/features/cervical-cancer.html>

<https://www.nccc-online.org/cervical-health-awareness-month/>

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