PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES FROM CERVICAL CANCER

Alabama has the third highest death rate from cervical cancer in the U.S., even though this is one of the few cancers that can be prevented. We have the tools to save lives, and most women and children can access them at no cost in our state.

(205) 778-8334
CervicalCancerAL@uabmc.edu
What is cervical cancer?
Cervical cancer is a cancer of the cervix, which is part of the female organs.

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.

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.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?
The HPV vaccine is most effective when children are vaccinated BEFORE they are exposed to the virus. All girls and boys who are 11 or 12 years old should receive the HPV vaccine when they get their other routine vaccinations, but children can get it as young as 9 years old.

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.

How is cervical cancer prevented?
HPV vaccination
There is a vaccine than 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.

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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 fifteen years of monitoring and research have continued to show that the HPV vaccination is very safe.

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.
How much does the HPV vaccine cost?
Most health insurance plans cover the HPV vaccine. The Vaccines for Children (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.


What if the screening test comes back positive?
Women should not panic. They should follow up as recommended by the 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:
In May of 2023, Alabama launched a statewide plan to end cervical cancer as a public health threat.

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 Prevention and Control at: https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/index.html or https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical/index.htm

Operation Wipe Out is a partnership of several organizations working 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, call (205) 778-8334 | email: CervicalCancerAL@uabmc.edu

This program is a partnership between the Alabama Department of Public Health, TogetHER for Health, University of Alabama at Birmingham Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center, Rotary Club of Birmingham, Rotary Club of Lafayette, American Cancer Society, Quality of Life Health Services Inc., Chambers County School District, Auburn University, Circle of Care Center for Families, and Russell Medical Cancer Center.