



## CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION AND SCREENING

Cancer Prevention Series 2

The cervix is the lower part of the uterus (womb) that connects the body of the uterus to the vagina.

Cervical cancer is common among females in Hong Kong. Almost all cervical cancers are caused by persistent infection with one of the cancer-causing (or high-risk) human papillomavirus (HPV) types. HPV infection is usually found in people who have ever been sexually active. Most people with HPV infection do not have any symptoms and will clear the infection on their own. Some women with persistent high-risk HPV infection in the cervix will develop abnormal (pre-cancerous) cell changes. While the majority of these changes will regress to normal, some may progress to cancer over years.



### Am I at risk of cervical cancer?

Risk factors for HPV infection or cervical cancer include:

- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexual intercourse at early age
- Co-infection with sexually-transmitted diseases
- Smoking
- Weakened immunity
- Long-term use of oral contraceptive pills for more than 5 years (the risk returns to normal after 10 years of stopping use)
- High number of childbirths or young age at first pregnancy

Despite the above risk factors, **regular cervical screening and timely treatment of the pre-cancerous changes can prevent cervical cancer.**

### What are the common symptoms of cervical cancer?

Early stage of cervical cancer may produce no symptoms at all.

Common symptom:

- abnormal vaginal bleeding (between periods, during or after sex, or after menopause)

Other symptoms:

- foul-smelling vaginal discharge
- pelvic pain, backache
- blood in urine or pain on passing urine
- leg swelling
- general tiredness and weight loss

You should consult a doctor as soon as possible if you develop any symptoms, even if your latest cervical screening result is normal.

### How to reduce my chance of getting cervical cancer?

Regular cervical screening is proven to be an effective way of preventing cervical cancer. Other preventive measures include:

- Receive HPV vaccine
- Practise safer sex (e.g. use condoms and avoid having multiple sexual partners) to reduce the chance of infection with HPV and other sexually transmitted diseases
- Do not smoke



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## Should I get screened?

Women aged 25 to 64 who ever had sexual experience should have regular cervical screening.

### For Asymptomatic Women at Average Risk

- Women **aged 25 to 29** who ever had sexual experience should have screening by cytology every 3 years after two consecutive normal annual screenings.
- Women **aged 30 to 64** who ever had sexual experience should have screening by:
  - i) **cytology** every 3 years after two consecutive normal annual screenings; **or**
  - ii) **HPV testing** every 5 years; **or**
  - iii) **co-testing (cytology and HPV testing)** every 5 years.
- Women **aged 65 or above** who ever had sexual experience:
  - i) may discontinue screening if routine screenings within 10 years are normal.
  - ii) should be screened if they have never had cervical screening.

### For Women at Increased Risk

- Women **aged 21 to 24** who ever had sexual experience and with risk factors for HPV infection or cervical cancer are considered at increased risk. They should receive screening based on the doctor's assessment and recommendations.
- **Other women at high risk of developing cervical cancer** may require more frequent screenings based on the doctor's assessment.

## Where can I receive cervical screening?

In Hong Kong, family doctors, gynaecologists, non-governmental organisations, Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) of the Department of Health provide cervical screening services. Please contact your selected service providers to receive cervical screening.



List of service providers registered with the Cervical Screening Information System:  
<https://www.cervicalscreening.gov.hk/en/serviceproviders.html>



For cervical screening service at the MCHCs, please call the Cervical Screening Service 24-hour Phone Booking and Information Hotline at 3166 6631.



Department of Health