

## **Cervical Cancer Prevention Week –**

**Mon 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022**

### **What is Cervical Cancer?**

Cervical cancer is a cancer in the cervix, the opening of the womb from the vagina.

**Cervical cancer** is the fourth most common cancer in women worldwide. The primary risk factor for **cervical cancer** is human papillomavirus (HPV) infection

### **What is HPV?**

HPV is the name given to a very common group of viruses.

There are many types of HPV, some of which are called "high risk" because they're linked to the development of cancers, such as cervical cancer, anal cancer, genital cancers, and cancers of the head and neck.

Other types can cause conditions like [warts](#) or [verruucas](#).

High risk types of HPV can be found in more than 99% of cervical cancers.

HPV infections do not usually cause any symptoms, and most people will not know they're infected.

### **What are the different types of HPV and what do they do?**

There are more than 100 different types of HPV, and around 40 that affect the genital area.

HPV is a very common virus and can be passed on through any kind of sexual contact with another person who already has it. People do not always get genital warts, but the virus is still in their system and could cause damage. This means that people with HPV can pass the infection to others without knowing it.

Most people will get an HPV infection at some point in their lives and their bodies will get rid of it naturally without treatment.

But some people infected with a high-risk type of HPV will not be able to clear it.

Over time, this can cause abnormal tissue growth as well as other changes, which can lead to cancer if not treated.

### **Who can have the HPV vaccine through the NHS vaccination programme?**

The 1st dose of the HPV vaccine is routinely offered to girls and boys aged 12 and 13 in school Year 8. The 2nd dose is offered 6 to 24 months after the 1st dose.

If you miss either of your HPV vaccine doses, speak to your GP surgery and make an appointment to have the missed dose as soon as possible.

It's important to have both doses of the vaccine to be fully protected.

### **Cervical Screening**

Cervical screening (a smear test) checks the health of your cervix. It's not a test for cancer, it's a test to help prevent cancer.

All women aged 25 to 64 are invited for screening by letter. During the screening appointment, a small sample of cells will be taken from your cervix.

The sample is checked for certain types of (HPV) that can cause changes to the cells of your cervix.

However, one in three women do not attend cervical screening.

## Early signs of Cervical Cancer

An early sign of cervical cancer is unusual vaginal bleeding, such as bleeding after sex or between periods. ..or a heavy discharge...but you do not always get symptoms.

Abnormal bleeding does not mean you have cervical cancer, but you should see a GP as soon as possible to get it checked out.

If a GP thinks you might have cervical cancer, you should be referred to see a specialist within 2 weeks.

If cervical cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, it's usually possible to treat it using surgery.

In some cases, it's possible to leave the womb in place, but it may need to be removed.

The surgical procedure used to remove the womb is called a hysterectomy.

Radiotherapy is another option for some women with early-stage cervical cancer.

In some cases, it is used alongside surgery or chemotherapy, or both.

More advanced cases of cervical cancer are usually treated using a combination of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

**Cervical cancer is curable**, but it is difficult for doctors to know for sure that it will never come back following treatment. Therefore, doctors often use the term "remission" to describe cancer that has gone away and is no longer causing symptoms.

All women are at risk for cervical cancer. It occurs most often in women over age 30. It rarely develops in women younger than 20. Many older women do not realize that the risk of developing cervical cancer is still present as they age.

The prognosis for invasive cervical cancer depends on the stage.

More than 90% of women with stage 0 **survive at least 5 years after diagnosis**.

Stage I cervical cancer patients have a 5-year survival rate of 80% to 93%.

Women with stage II cervical cancer have a 5-year survival rate of 58% to 63%.