

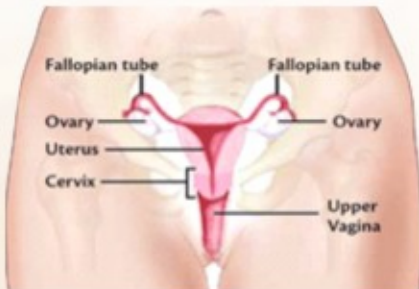
# MYTHS ABOUT CERVICAL CANCER



## WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER

**Cervical Cancer** is a cancer that affects

the cervix of women. The cervix is the mouth of the uterus (womb), the



place where a baby grows during pregnancy. It cannot be seen from outside and can only be felt and seen through the private part of the woman as shown in this photograph.

## HOW DO I KNOW THAT I HAVE CERVICAL CANCER

When cervical cancer is still early and curable, it has no symptoms, so regular screening is vital!

As the disease progresses one may notice any of the followings:

### Abnormal bleeding from the private part

that occurs when one is not on monthly menstrual period.

**Bleeding after sex** or after any examination of the woman's private part

Sometimes, the disease may appear as **menstrual periods** that last **longer** or the flow is **heavier than usual**

There may also be increased discharge from the private part, pain during sex or pain in the lower part of the tummy.

## EARLY DETECTION AND SCREENING

Cervical cancer can be detected early and even before it starts using a variety of methods - Visual Inspection with Acetic acid (VIA), Pap smear and HPV test.

## TREATMENT OF CERVICAL CANCER

The three methods of treatment are **Surgery** (operation), **Radiotherapy** (use of special x-rays to destroy cancer cells) and **Chemotherapy** (use of drugs). The treatment may involve a combination of these methods.

## WHAT IS THE OUTCOME OF TREATMENT?

This depends on how early the disease is found.

**Early cervical cancer is curable.**

**Advanced cervical cancer is not curable** but the pain and discomfort of advanced cancer can be relieved to a great extent even when the disease cannot be cured

**Can Traditional/Alternative medicine cure cervical cancer?**

**NO.** There is no evidence at all that native medicine can treat cancer.

## MYTHS ABOUT CERVICAL CANCER

**Myth:** It is not possible to have HIV and also get cancer

**Fact:** Yes it is possible to be living with HIV and also get cervical cancer at the same time. In fact, because the HIV infection makes the body less able to fight infection, it may increase the chances of getting cervical cancer.

**Myth:** Drinking water from dirty cups or poor hygiene can cause cancer.

**Fact:** While poor hygiene can cause many diseases, it does not cause cancer

**Myth:** Cervical cancer has no treatment except through supernatural intervention

**Fact:** Cervical cancer is curable if it is detected at the very early stage through screening. So, it is important that you get screened. It can also be prevented through HPV vaccination so it is beneficial to immunize children before they start having sex when they may acquire HPV infection.

**Myth:** God is ultimately the one who decide who gets cancer

**Fact:** God does not judge people because they have one disease or another. These are parts of our human condition.

**Myth:** Screening for cervical cancer is like asking God to give you the disease; it's like inviting cancer to one's body

**Fact:** Screening is like going out with an umbrella if the weather is cloudy. The umbrella does not cause rain but if it rains, you will benefit from the umbrella. In the same way, screening does not cause cancer but by detecting early changes associated with cancer, it provides protection from getting cancer or helps to find it at an early stage when it is curable.

**Myth:** Many people do not want to do the screening test because they are worried that if the result is positive, their 'secret' will 'come out'.

**Fact:** You do not have to worry about anyone else being told the results of your test. The health care personnel are highly trained and they are under oath to keep all patients information strictly confidential. The results of screening are only used to ensure that you get the treatment you need.

**Myth:** I cannot get cervical cancer because I have immunity (protected) against it.

**Fact:** Any woman who has ever had sexual exposure is not protected against it except if as a child you have received vaccination before sexual debut. It is therefore important that you get screened if you were not vaccinated before 1st sexual exposure as you may not be sure you have not acquired HPV infection.

**Myth:** Only promiscuous women get HPV infection

**Fact:** Any woman who has had sex can have HPV. Many people believe that only promiscuous women get HPV. But the truth is that any woman who has had sex, even with just one partner, could have been exposed to HPV. HPV is a very common germ. In fact, about eight out of 10 women will have had HPV at some point in time by the age of 50.

**Myth:** If a woman gets the HPV vaccine, she no longer needs to do screening or HPV test.

**Fact:** Girls and women who get the HPV vaccine will still need to be screened for cervical cancer during follow up. The HPV vaccine only protects against two of the more than a dozen types of cancer-causing HPV germs. Even then, vaccination is only

fully effective when given to women who have not yet been exposed to HPV. That means the ideal candidate for the vaccine is an adolescent girl or young woman who is not yet sexually active. The bottom line: All women, including those who are vaccinated, need regular screening if they are age 30 or older because the vaccine does not treat HPV infection that has occurred already.

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