

SPC/SPV HEALTH & WELLNESS MINISTRY

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month

(Reference - <https://www.cancer.org>)

What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer starts in the cells lining the cervix -- the lower part of the uterus (womb). The cervix connects the body of the uterus (the upper part where a fetus grows) to the vagina (birth canal). Cancer starts when cells in the body begin to grow out of control.

Key Statistics for Cervical Cancer

The American Cancer Society's estimates for cervical cancer in the United States for 2021 are:

- About 14,480 new cases of invasive cervical cancer will be diagnosed.
- About 4,290 women will die from cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer was once one of the most common causes of cancer death for American women. The cervical cancer death rate dropped significantly with the increased use of the Pap test.

In recent years, the HPV test has been approved as another screening test for cervical cancer since almost all cervical cancers are caused by HPV (human papillomavirus). The HPV test looks for infection by high-risk types of HPV that are more likely to cause pre-cancers and cancers of the cervix.

Cervical cancer is most frequently diagnosed in women between the ages of 35 and 44 with the average age at diagnosis being 50. 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. More than 20% of cases of cervical cancer are found in women over 65.

What's New in Cervical Cancer Research?

Sentinel lymph node biopsy (SNLB) - During surgery for cervical cancer, lymph nodes in the pelvis may be removed to check to see if the cancer has spread. Instead of removing many lymph nodes, a technique called sentinel lymph node biopsy can be used to target just the few lymph nodes most likely to contain cancer.

Immunotherapy - In cancer, the immune system cannot control the fast growth of tumor cells. Recently, new drugs called **immune checkpoint inhibitors** have been developed that “reset” the immune system. They have been found to be useful in treating a number of types of cancer.

HPV vaccines - Vaccines have been developed to prevent infection with some of the high risk HPV types that are associated with cervical cancer.

Targeted therapy- As researchers have learned more about the gene changes in cells that cause cancer, they have been able to develop new drugs that specifically target these changes. These targeted drugs work differently from standard chemotherapy drugs. They often have side effects different from those in chemotherapy.