

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CERVICAL CANCER!

Cervical cancer, the most common cancer among Indian women, is a disease in which cancer affects tissues of the cervix, i.e. the mouth or opening of the uterus (womb). 1,25,000 women are affected each year, needlessly claiming an estimated 50,000 lives. The aim of this pamphlet is to alert you about the prevention and early detection of cervical cancer.

RISK FACTORS :

- Early onset of sexual activity
- Early age at marriage
- First pregnancy before 20 years of age
- Multiple pregnancies at short intervals. (This leads to repeated injury to the cervix, leaving it no time to heal.)
- Sexual promiscuity i.e. multiple male sexual partners or even a single male partner having sexual relations with multiple female partners.
- Poor genital hygiene.
- Genital tract infections especially HPV (human papilloma virus) infection.
- Tobacco addiction.

The tragedy is that most of these factors are preventable, but because of ignorance, unhygienic conditions and lack of awareness about personal health, cervical cancer still accounts for a large number of deaths.

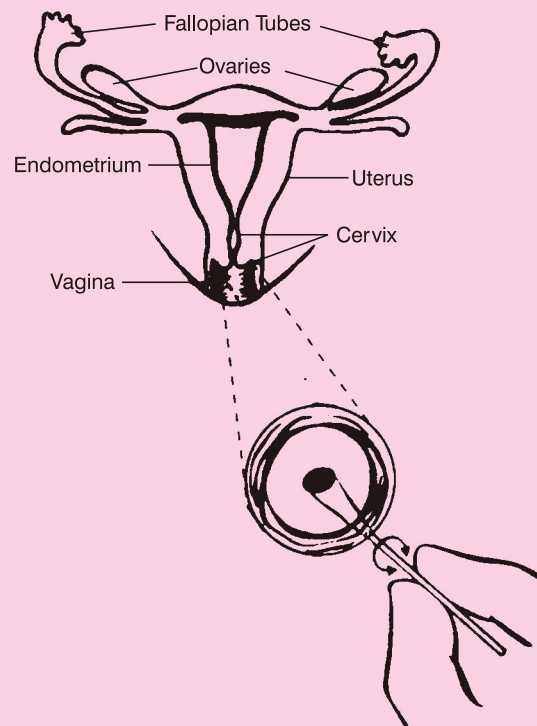
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS :

- Bleeding between menstrual periods
- Bleeding after sexual intercourse
- Bleeding anytime after menopause
- Irregular heavy menstrual periods
- Unusual blood stained vaginal discharge
- Unexplained weakness / tiredness / weight loss

However, one should remember that simple tests can detect early pre-cancerous cervical changes (Dysplasias) much before these signs and symptoms occur.

THE PAP SMEAR

The test is simple and painless. Using a cotton swab or a brush, cells from the cervix are collected and spread over a glass slide and examined under a microscope.



PREVENT CERVICAL CANCER BY :

- Getting a regular Pap test done if you are above the age of 30 and have/had sexual activity.
- Delaying the age of marriage, so that the age at first sexual intercourse also gets delayed.
- Postponing the birth of the first child to after 20 years using contraceptives.
- Avoiding multiple and rapid pregnancies through family planning.
- Modifying life-style patterns like discouraging sexual intercourse at an early age, avoiding intercourse with multiple partners, stopping tobacco use.
- Using barrier contraceptives (e.g. condoms) to prevent sexually transmitted infections. This would also help to space births.
- Maintaining good genital hygiene at all times, particularly while bathing and especially during your menstrual period. Your partner's genital hygiene is also important.
- Seeking medical help from either your gynaecologist or family doctor, if you have any of the above signs and symptoms at the earliest.



"WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT WOMEN'S CANCERS"

The Department of Preventive Oncology, Tata Memorial Hospital provides this information in an endeavour to spread awareness on Women's cancers. Once you have got enlightened, be sure to spread the message on to others!

Awareness leading to early detection and treatment would greatly reduce the pain, suffering and death caused by these cancers.

This initiative has been launched in October, because the month of October is designated as Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the symbol being a pink ribbon.



Department of Preventive Oncology,
Tata Memorial Hospital
3rd Floor, Service Block 'D',
Parel, Mumbai - 400 012.
Tel.: 2417 7000 Extn.: 4649

**Cancer is curable
if detected early**