

The *digene* HPV Test

What you should know
about cervical cancer

Take the test — not the risk



www.theHPVtest.com



Cervical cancer — a preventable disease

Part of the annual preventive medical examination by your gynecologist is to test for the development of malignant changes of the cervix. Every year 275,000 women die of cervical cancer worldwide, which makes cervical cancer the number 2 cancer in women. Since women often develop this disease when they are 30–50 years of age, this is a significant threat to the integrity of families.

Cervical cancer is a disease that can easily be prevented if the disease or the virus that causes the disease is detected at an early stage.

Please read below, how you can help prevent exposing yourself to the risk of developing cervical cancer by getting tested for infection with the human papillomavirus (HPV).



What is HPV?

Human papilloma virus (HPV) is a very common virus, which can cause cervical cancer. All types of human papillomavirus are transmitted through skin-to-skin contact. Some of them can cause warts while others may lead to cell abnormalities that can potentially progress to cancer.

For most women, HPV is not a problem. They are able to fight off the infection before it causes any problems. For some, however, the infection persists. Men can also get HPV and can transmit the virus to others. However, it is rare for HPV to cause cancer in men.

How are HPV and cervical cancer linked?

There are about 150 types of HPV, of which approximately 30 types affect the genital area and some of which can cause cervical cancer. When a woman is infected with a high-risk type of HPV, she may not be able to fight the infection. If the virus is not detected and treated early, abnormal cells may form on the cervix and they may develop into cervical cancer.

How do I get HPV?

HPV is a highly infectious virus and 80% of the population will be infected at least once in their life. HPV is transmitted through skin-to-skin contact, such as through sexual intercourse. Once you have the virus, it may not cause any problems as it persists inactively. It may simply go away on its own. This is because HPV may remain dormant in the cervical cells for months or years and not be detected unless it reactivates and causes the formation of abnormal cells. Therefore, it is important to get regularly tested for HPV.



How will I know if I have got HPV?

HPV does not usually show symptoms — you can have HPV and not know it.

The *digene* HPV Test determines whether you have one or more of 13 potentially cancer-causing types of the virus. This test does not require any additional procedures and is done by a laboratory on a cervical cell sample, collected during a pelvic examination in the same way the smear test (Pap test) is done.

How can the right tests prevent cervical cancer?

The Pap test — the first step in cervical cancer diagnostics

The sample of cervical cells is sent to a lab, where it is examined under a microscope for signs of abnormal changes caused by HPV. If the cells look abnormal, you may be recalled for a repeat Pap smear test or another examination called colposcopy. If abnormal cells are found early, they can be removed before cancer develops.

However, the Pap test is not always reliable, since it cannot detect HPV directly. The Pap test depends on the quality of the cell sample and the level of skill of the person who examines it. Sometimes negative results turn out to be HPV positive (research shows that the Pap test can fail to find abnormal cells that need treatment as frequently as 53% percent of the time). In some cases, cells may appear abnormal when they are not.



The *digene* HPV Test — the gold standard in HPV testing

The HPV test is also done on a sample of cervical cells and can often be done on the same sample collected for the Pap test.

The *digene* HPV Test uses advanced, molecular technology to directly detect HPV types which cause 93% of pre-cancer cases. It is the most widely accepted HPV test, and has been validated extensively in conjunction with the Pap in clinical studies. One significant advantage is that the results are not dependent on the skills of the person examining the cells.

Knowing whether you have HPV shows if you are at risk for cervical cancer and if you will need further tests, or not.



Who should take the HPV test?

It is recommended that all women 30 years of age or older should get HPV testing along with a Pap smear test for routine diagnostics. This is the age group in which cervical cancer most often develops, because HPV infections are usually persistent. For women aged under 30, routine HPV testing is not necessary, because infections in younger women are usually not active for very long. However, medical experts recommend that women of any age have an HPV test when their Pap smear results are unclear.

HPV infections can persist for many months or even years before they cause problems. If your Pap is normal, but you have high-risk HPV, it's a warning that you may be at risk of developing cervical cancer. Medical experts suggest that if re-testing a year later still shows high-risk HPV, further evaluation is necessary.

When the Pap and HPV tests are done together on a regular basis, cervical cancer can almost always be prevented.

What about the new HPV vaccines — can they prevent infection?

The vaccines only protect against two known cancer-causing types of this virus and therefore do not protect against many dangerous sub-types. Also, there is no clinical evidence that the vaccines function when you have been infected by HPV before you get the vaccine. HPV is transmitted through intimate skin-to-skin contact. Thus, the vaccines are most effective for females who have not yet been exposed to the two types of HPV targeted by the vaccine through sexual contact. The vaccines are not a cure for existing infections.

Therefore, every woman — even if vaccinated — should continue to visit her gynecologist to be tested for cervical cancer.

The *digene* HPV Test detects 13 high-risk HPV types, responsible for nearly 100% of cervical cancer, and when combined with Pap screening programs in woman over 30 can provide high assurance of detecting cervical disease at the earliest stage possible.

For more information, visit www.theHPVtest.com.

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