



FACE YOUR *Health*

A learning session for women

LEARNING SESSION: FLIP CHART



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention



What We're Talking About Today

- ▶ What cervical cancer is.
- ▶ How cervical cancer develops.
- ▶ Why you need to get screened for cervical cancer.
- ▶ How often you should get screened.
- ▶ What your test results mean.
- ▶ What you can do to get screened and lower your risk of getting cervical cancer.

Now that we've gotten to know a little about each other, let's get started.

Here's what we're talking about today:

- ▶ What cervical cancer is.
- ▶ How cervical cancer develops.
- ▶ Why you need to get screened for cervical cancer.
- ▶ How often you should get screened.
- ▶ What your test results mean.
- ▶ What you can do to get screened and lower your risk of getting cervical cancer.

If you know some of this information, that's great—we'll just do a quick review. We can go as fast or as slow as you like. At the end of the session, I'll give you handouts with the main points you need to remember.

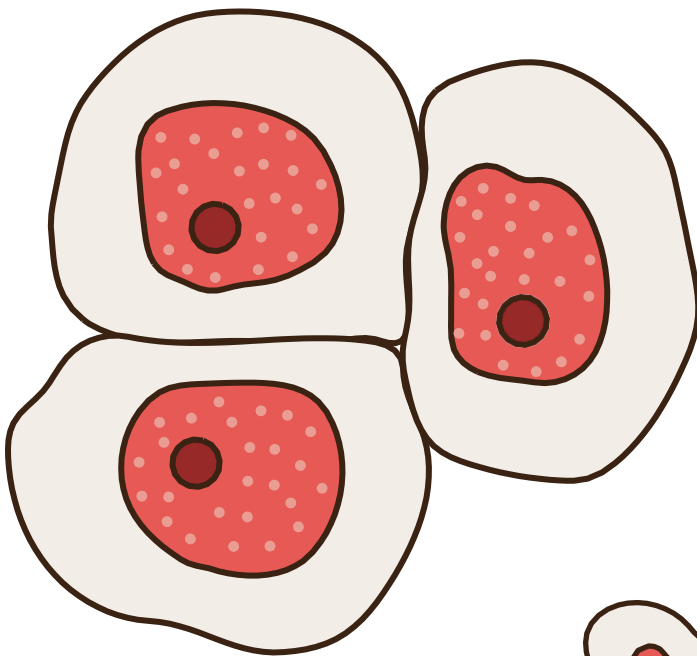
This is your time to learn. If any of the information is confusing, or if you have questions during the session, please stop me and ask. No question is a "dumb" question. This is a safe space. What we say here stays here.

I'll also be available after the session. You can come talk to me then.

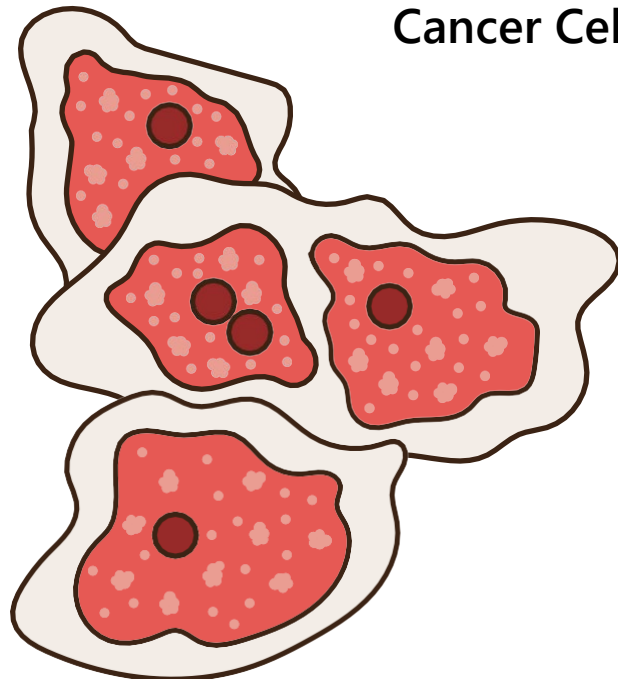
Are there any questions before we begin?

What Is Cervical Cancer?

Normal Cells



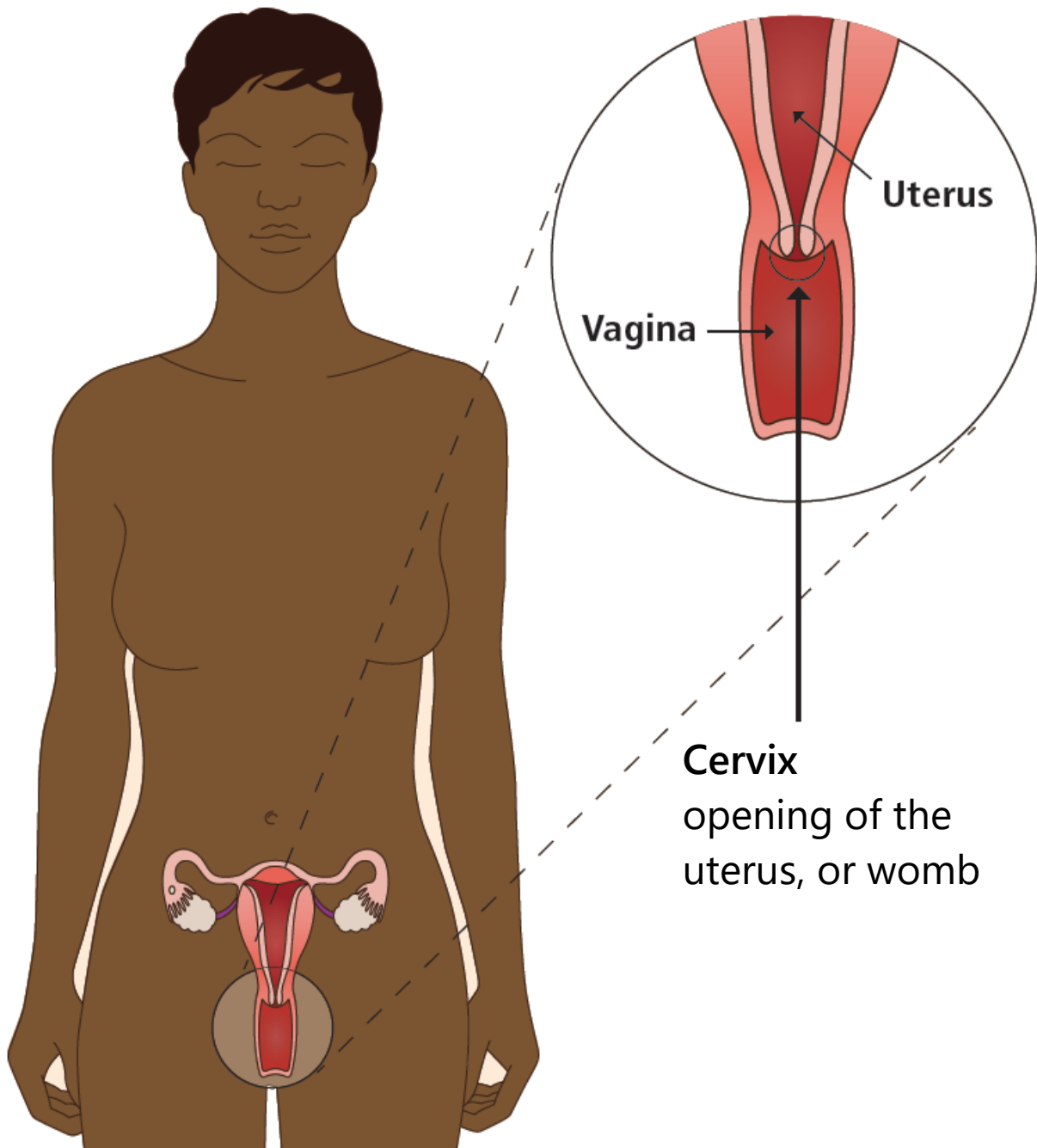
Cancer Cells



Let's start with a quick biology review.

- ▶ Cells are the basic building blocks of life. Everything in your body is made up of cells. They're so small, you can't see them with your eyes.
- ▶ Cancer happens when cells grow out of control or turn abnormal.
- ▶ When these abnormal cells grow in the cervix, it's called cervical cancer.
- ▶ You can have cervical cancer and not know it. Many women don't have any symptoms.
- ▶ The good news: you can prevent cervical cancer or find cell changes early when these changes are easier to treat. If you get screened regularly, you can find out if you have the virus that can cause cervical cancer, or you have a better chance of finding and treating abnormal cells before they cause a problem.
- ▶ Cervical cancer can usually be treated if you find it early.

The Female Reproductive System



What do you know about your cervix?

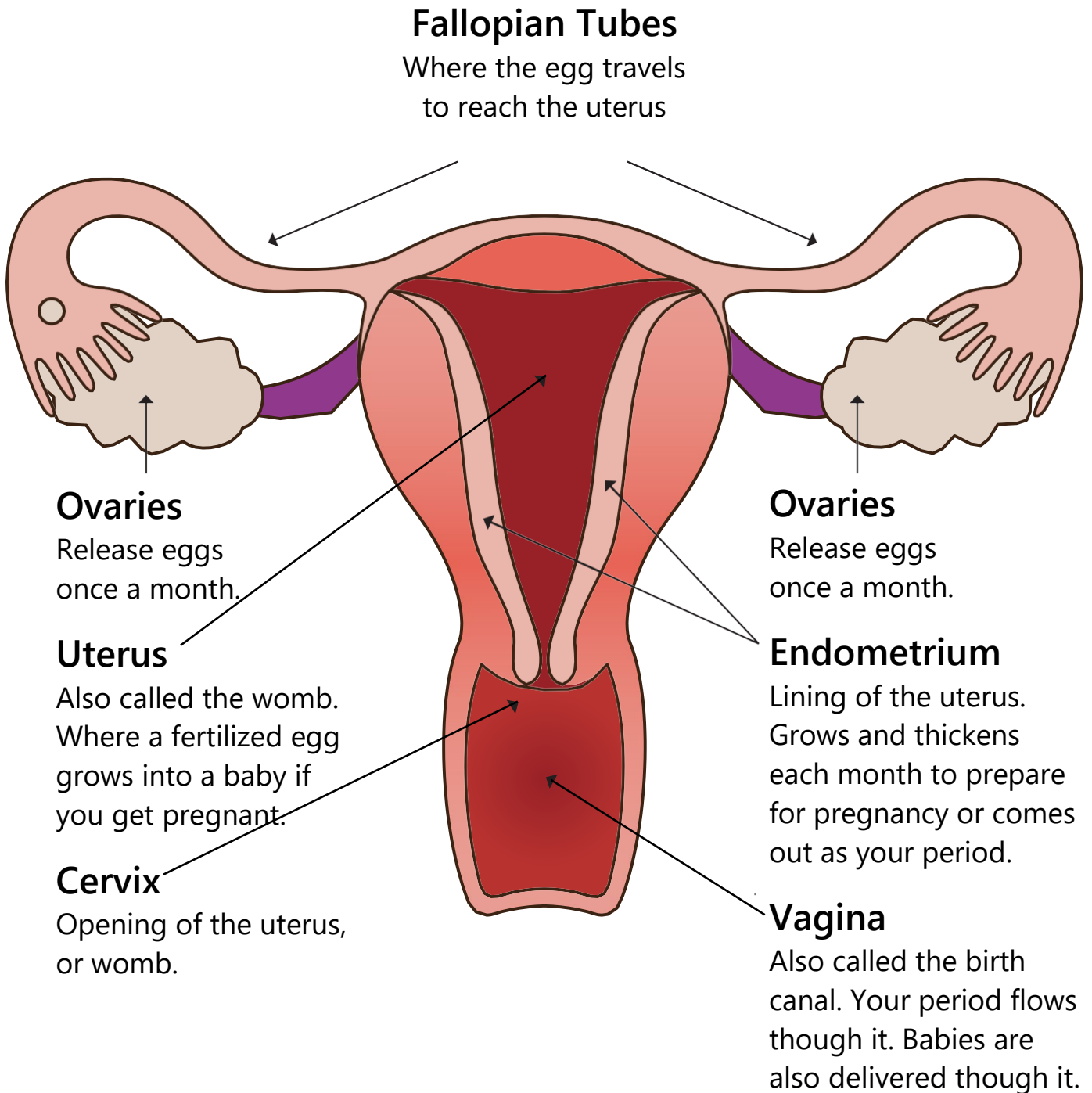
Can you find it on this diagram?

Prompt group to describe what they think the cervix is or does and where it's located in the body.

This picture shows the different parts of your reproductive system. It's enlarged so it's easier to see.

- ▶ Can you see where the cervix is?
- ▶ It's the opening at the mouth of the uterus, also called the womb.
- ▶ When you have your period, blood flows from the uterus through the cervix and into your vagina so it can leave your body.
- ▶ During childbirth, the cervix expands so the baby can pass through.

The Female Reproductive System



If there's time, and if the group is engaged, review the rest of the items in the diagram.

Let's look at the other parts of your reproductive system.

- ▶ You have **two ovaries**, one on each side of the uterus. The ovaries make female hormones and produce eggs. They release an egg once a month, about 2 weeks before your period.
- ▶ You also have **two fallopian tubes**, one on each side of the uterus. When an ovary releases an egg, it travels through the fallopian tube to the uterus.
- ▶ Your **uterus** is this small, pear-shaped organ in your pelvis. If that egg is fertilized and you get pregnant, this is where the baby grows.
- ▶ The lining of your uterus is called the **endometrium**. It grows and thickens every month to prepare for pregnancy. If you don't get pregnant, it comes out through your vagina as your period.
- ▶ Your **vagina**, or birth canal, goes from your uterus to the outside of your body.

If you have had a hysterectomy, you may have had your cervix removed as part of a total hysterectomy for non-cancerous conditions, like fibroids.



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What Have You Heard About Cervical Cancer?



Before we start talking about cervical cancer, I'd like to hear from you. What have you heard about cervical cancer, especially how it can develop?

Prompt group to share what they know about cervical cancer—what it is, how it develops, how you can prevent it, or how you can treat it.

Potential myths or misperceptions about cervical cancer you may hear or want to probe for:

- ▶ You can't prevent it.
- ▶ You'll die from it.
- ▶ Things that make you more likely to get it are: the food you eat, not getting enough exercise, or your family history.
- ▶ I don't have to worry about it because: I'm healthy, I'm older, I'm not having sex, I had a hysterectomy*, I only have sex with women, or I don't plan to have any more children.
- ▶ It's caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Prompt women to discuss types of hysterectomy. If you had a hysterectomy, do you know what type of hysterectomy you received?

Thanks for sharing what you've heard. Let's explore further what's fact and what's fiction.

What Causes Cervical Cancer?

Human Papillomavirus

HPV

Most cervical cancer is caused by the human papillomavirus, or HPV.

- ▶ HPV is common.
- ▶ It's passed through sexual contact.
- ▶ It usually doesn't cause health problems.
- ▶ But it can lead to problems with your cervix.
- ▶ In rare cases, it can lead to cervical cancer.

Most of the time, cervical cancer is caused by a virus called the human papillomavirus, or HPV. HPV is not the same thing as HIV.

Be ready to discuss the difference between HIV and HPV if questions come up. See the Quick Reference Guide for more information.

There are different types of HPV. Some affect your cervix; some cause skin warts in the genital area. We're going to talk about the types that affect your cervix.

- ▶ You get HPV from having sexual contact with a man or a woman who has the virus.
- ▶ HPV infection is very common in people who are sexually active. Many people don't know they have it, so they don't realize they're passing it on.
- ▶ Most of the time, HPV doesn't cause health problems and goes away on its own.
- ▶ But sometimes it doesn't go away. Some types of HPV can cause the cells of your cervix to go from normal to abnormal. In rare cases, over a long time—around 10 to 15 years—an HPV infection can cause cervical cancer.
- ▶ You can't see or feel these changes happening. That's why it's important to get screened. Screening is the only way to find and treat abnormal cells before they turn into cancer.
- ▶ If you're younger than age 27, you can also get a vaccine that can keep you from getting the types of HPV that cause cervical cancer. If you're 27 to 45 years old, talk to your doctor about it.

Be ready to clarify that two types of HPV are responsible for most cervical cancers, if questions come up. See the Quick Reference Guide for more information.

Who Can Develop Cervical Cancer?

Any woman can develop cervical cancer. It's especially important to get screened if you:

- ▶ Haven't been screened in 3 or more years.
- ▶ Have HPV.
- ▶ Have multiple sexual partners.
- ▶ Have had chlamydia or HIV.
- ▶ Smoke.
- ▶ Are over age 30.



Any woman can develop cervical cancer. Some women have a higher chance of developing cervical cancer.

All women should get screened. It is especially important to get screened when:

- ▶ You're haven't been screened in 3 or more years.
- ▶ You have HPV.
- ▶ You have had previous abnormal Pap test results.
- ▶ You have multiple sexual partners. The more people you have sex with, the higher your risk.
- ▶ You've had chlamydia, which is a treatable infection you can get from sexual contact.
- ▶ You have HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.
- ▶ You've used birth control pills for more than 5 years.
- ▶ You've given birth three or more times.
- ▶ You smoke cigarettes.
- ▶ You're older than 30.
- ▶ Your mother took DES while she was pregnant with you. Diethylstilbestrol (DES) is a drug that was given to pregnant women between 1940 and 1971 to prevent miscarriage and other pregnancy problems.

Be ready to discuss why these things can put women at greater risk. See the Quick Reference Guide for more information.

Why Do You Need to Get Screened for Cervical Cancer?

FACT:

African American women are more likely to die from cervical cancer than other women in the United States.



This doesn't have to happen.

It's especially important for African American women to make getting screened a priority.

As an African American woman, you're more likely than other women—except Hispanic women—to develop cervical cancer.

You're also the most likely to die from this disease. African American women die from cervical cancer at higher rates than other women in the United States.

Why does this happen? There could be a number of reasons. African American women may:

- ▶ Not get screened enough.
- ▶ Not get their test results.
- ▶ Not get timely follow-up after receiving abnormal test results.
- ▶ Be more likely to be diagnosed with types of cancer that are harder to treat.
- ▶ Get diagnosed at a later stage of cancer.
- ▶ Get different types of treatment.

The bottom line?

This doesn't have to happen. Cervical cancer can be prevented. And if you find it early, cervical cancer can be treated.

So, what can you do? Get screened! Here's what that means.

How Do You Get Screened for Cervical Cancer?



Screening means checking for cancer in people who do not have symptoms.

You can be screened for cervical cancer in three ways:

1. A **Pap test**, which checks your cervix for abnormal cells that could turn into cervical cancer. A Pap test can also find cervical cancer early, when it is easier to treat.
2. An **HPV test**, which can tell you if you have the virus that can cause cervical cancer.
3. A **Pap test and an HPV test** combined. This is sometimes referred to as co-testing.

When you get these tests, you may also get a pelvic exam. A pelvic exam is done in a doctor's office or clinic. It's often part of a routine checkup.

Have you ever had an exam like this done?

Give the group a chance to share experiences or reactions.

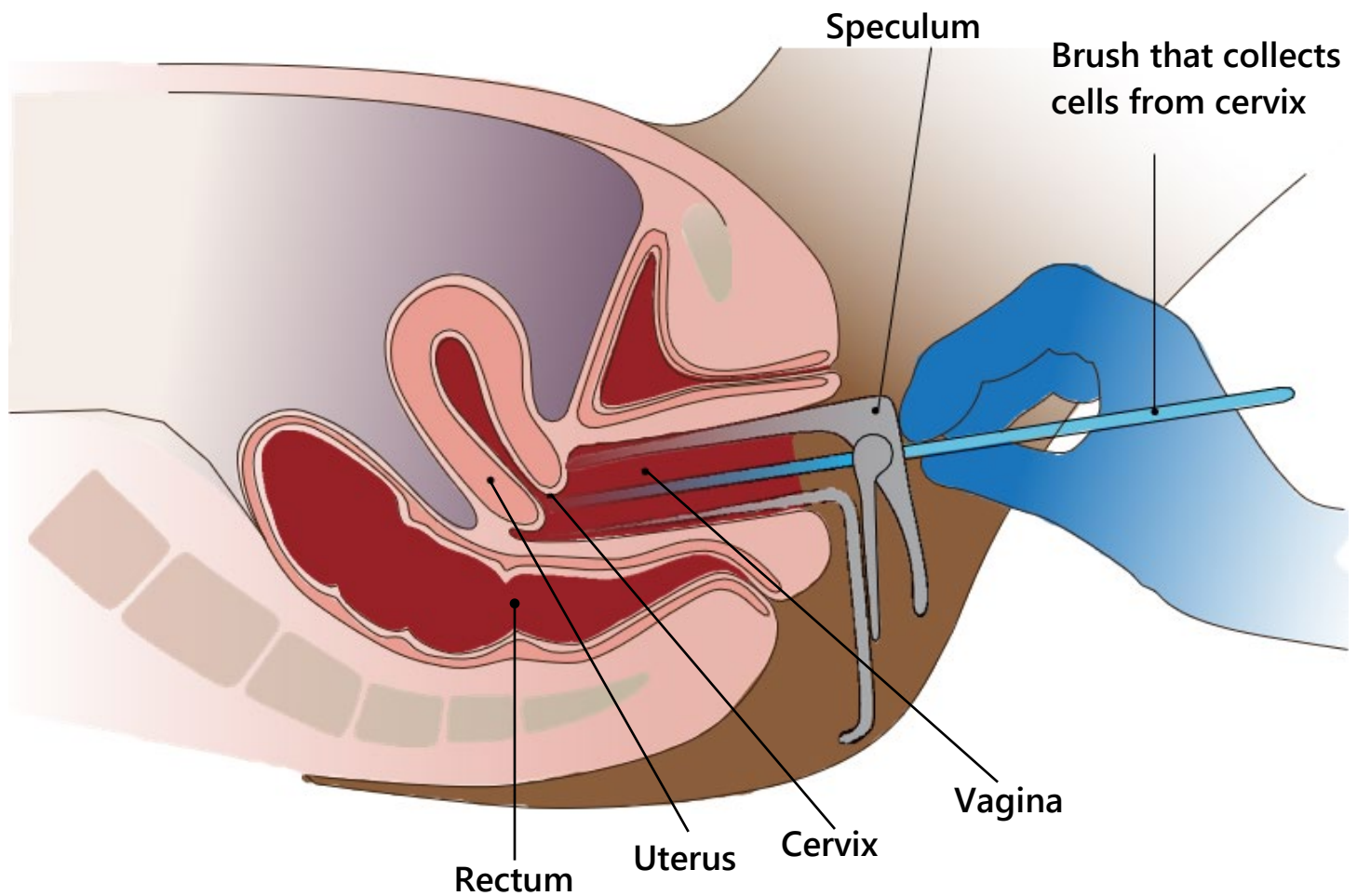
Let's look at the picture and talk about what happens during a cervical cancer screening test.

- ▶ You'll be asked to take off your clothes in private and put on a gown.
- ▶ You lie on your back on an exam table with your knees up and your feet in footrests called stirrups, just like the woman in the picture.

Be ready to address whether women can request a female doctor or ask a female nurse or other assistant to be in the room during the exam. See the Quick Reference Guide for more information.

How Do You Get Screened for Cervical Cancer?

Pap Test

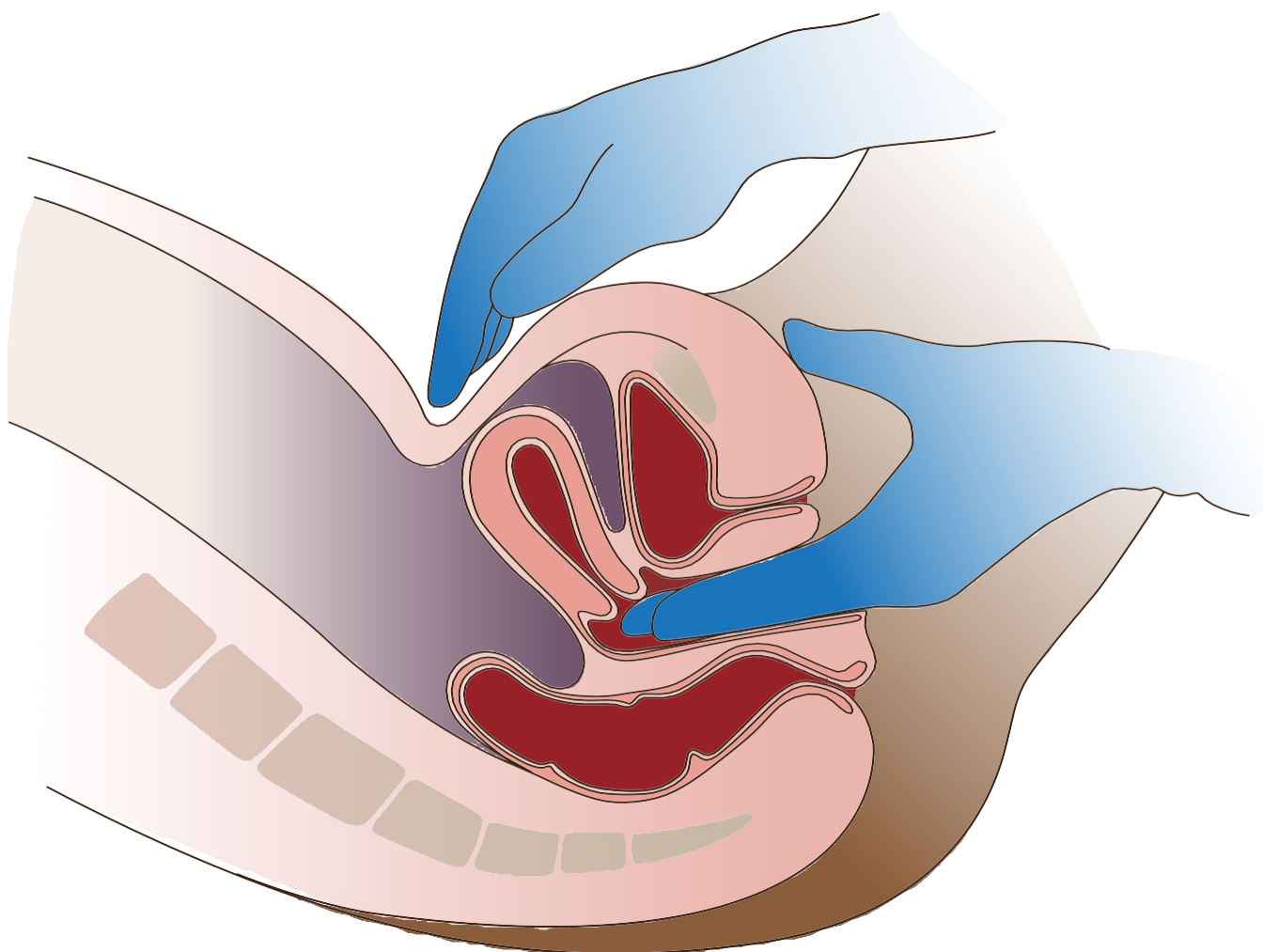


Now let's look a little closer.

- ▶ The doctor puts a plastic or metal instrument called a speculum into your vagina. See the drawing of it [here](#)?
- ▶ The speculum keeps the vagina open so the doctor can see your cervix. You might feel some pressure from the speculum.
- ▶ The doctor collects some cells from your cervix using a soft brush, spatula, or other swab—like this one in the picture. You might feel a little pinch or cramp. It may be a bit uncomfortable, but it's not painful.
- ▶ If you get a Pap test, the cells will be checked to see if they are normal or abnormal. The Pap test looks for precancers or cell changes that may become cervical cancer if they are not treated appropriately.
- ▶ If you get an HPV test, the cells will be tested for the virus that can cause cell changes.

Important to remember: The Pap test and the HPV test only screen for cervical cancer. They can't tell you if you have other sexually transmitted infections like chlamydia or gonorrhea, and they don't screen for other cancers.

Pelvic Exam



- ▶ The doctor will take the speculum out. He or she may also do a manual pelvic exam.
- ▶ The doctor puts two fingers inside your vagina and uses the other hand to press down on your stomach area.
- ▶ This exam lets the doctor feel your uterus, ovaries, and other organs to see if they have changed shape or size—which could signal a problem.

If you think you need to be checked for other infections or are having any unusual health symptoms, make sure to tell the doctor or nurse.



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How Should You Prepare for Your Screening Test?



Period



Douche



Tampon



Sex



**Birth control foam,
cream, or jelly**



**Medicine or cream
in your vagina**

List of items to
AVOID

Let's say you've made your appointment to get screened! Here are some things to know before you go.

Make sure you won't be on your period. That can make it hard to get accurate test results. If you get your period, call and reschedule the appointment.

For the 2 days before your exam:

- ▶ Don't douche. If you need to, rinse the vagina with water.
- ▶ Don't use a tampon.
- ▶ Don't have sex.
- ▶ Don't use a birth control foam, cream, or jelly.
- ▶ Don't use any medicine or cream in your vagina.

All of these things can also make it hard to get accurate test results.



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How Often Should You Get Screened for Cervical Cancer?

AGE 21

First Pap test

AGES 21 to 30

Pap test every 3 years

AGES 30 to 65

Pap test every 3 years, OR
HPV test every 5 years, OR
Pap and HPV test together every 5 years (co-testing)

OLDER THAN 65

After age 65, you may be able to stop screening OR
you may need to get screened if you haven't been
screened in awhile and have not had a hysterectomy.
Talk with your doctor.

The most important thing to know about cervical cancer screening:
One screening is not enough.

The type of screening you need depends on your age.

- ▶ When you turn 21, get your first Pap test. If you're older than 21 and you haven't had a Pap test yet, start as soon as you can!
- ▶ From age 30 to 65, you have three options:
 1. Get a Pap test every 3 years, OR
 2. Get an HPV test every 5 years, OR
 3. Get a Pap test and an HPV test together (co-testing) every 5 years.
- ▶ Keep getting screened until you turn 65, even if you've stopped having babies, no longer have periods because of menopause (change of life), or have not had sex in awhile.
- ▶ After age 65, you may be able to stop screening OR you may need to get screened if you haven't been screened in awhile and have not had a hysterectomy. Talk with your doctor.

If you've had a hysterectomy and your cervix has been taken out, you may not need to be screened. Talk with your doctor.

Remember: Regular screening can help prevent cervical cancer or find it early, when it's easier to treat. Get a Pap test every 3 years. Or get an HPV test, or an HPV test and a Pap test together, every 5 years.



What Do Your Test Results Mean?



So, you've had your screening appointment and you're waiting for your results. Here's what to expect:

- ▶ You'll usually get the results in a couple of weeks. Most doctors and clinics will send you a letter or have someone call you if there is a problem.
- ▶ If more than 2 weeks go by and you haven't heard about your results, call the clinic to ask for them.

Here's what your test results might say:

- ▶ If you got a Pap test, your result will be normal, unclear, or abnormal.
- ▶ If you got an HPV test, your result will be negative or positive.

The bottom line? If your Pap test result is abnormal or unclear, or your HPV test result is positive, you need to follow up with your doctor.

Abnormal results usually do not mean that you have cervical cancer. But it is important to follow up with the clinic, so you know what to do next.

You can call me if you're nervous, worried, or confused about what you hear. I will help you plan for the next steps.

If there's time, play the "Face the Facts" game.



What Can You Do to Prevent Cervical Cancer?



Get screened every
3 or 5 years.



Don't smoke.



Use condoms.



Limit your number
of sexual partners.



Get the HPV vaccine
if you're under 27.
If you're 27 to 45,
talk to your doctor
about it.

The most important thing you can do to help prevent cervical cancer:

Get regular screening tests. Get a Pap test every 3 years. Or get an HPV test, or an HPV test and a Pap test together, every 5 years. Don't wait—you can start right away!

Here are other things you can do to lower your chances of developing cervical cancer.

- ▶ Don't smoke.
- ▶ Use condoms whenever you have sex.
- ▶ Limit your number of sexual partners.
- ▶ Get an HPV vaccine if you're younger than age 27 and haven't been vaccinated. If you're 27 to 45, talk to your doctor about it. The HPV vaccine can protect you from the types of HPV that cause cancer.
- ▶ Doctors recommend that girls—and boys—get the vaccine around age 11. But you can get vaccinated up to age 26.

Be ready to discuss HPV vaccine schedules, safety, and age recommendations. See the Quick Reference Guide for more information.



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What Else Makes It Hard to Get Screened?



So, what else makes it hard to get screened? How can we overcome these challenges?

- ▶ No health care.
- ▶ No child care.
- ▶ No transportation.
- ▶ Too busy.
- ▶ Don't like doctors.
- ▶ Not having sex right now.

If there's time, play the "Face Yourself" game.

What Should You Do Next?

Make a promise to yourself to take these steps:

☒ Make an appointment to get screened.

☒ Find someone to watch your children, grandchildren, or any family members you care for.

☒ Find a way to get to your appointment.

☒ Make time to go to your appointment.

☒ Get your test results and make sure you understand them.

☒ Go for a follow-up appointment if you need to.

Do you feel like you know more now about cervical cancer than you did when we started talking?

Now it's time to turn that knowledge into action! You have the power to take control of your health. You just have to take that first step.

Hand out copies of the Promise Sheet.

I would like you to make a promise to yourself to get screened for cervical cancer. Take a moment to think about your personal challenges to getting screened. Then think about the specific steps you need to take to overcome those challenges.

Are you ready to:

- ▶ Make an appointment to get screened?
- ▶ Find someone to watch your children, grandchildren, or any family members you care for?
- ▶ Find a way to get to your appointment?
- ▶ Make time to go to your appointment?
- ▶ Get your test results and make sure you understand them?
- ▶ Go for a follow-up appointment if you need to?

When you're ready—either here or at home—mark all the steps you're going to take on this sheet and set a date for completing them. Then sign the sheet. Hold on to the sheet. It will help you remember your promise.

And when you've done what you promised to do, treat yourself for keeping your promise!

Make sure to write down on this page how you're going to do that too!



REMEMBER

Get screened to protect yourself from cervical cancer. Get a Pap test every 3 years. Or get an HPV test, or an HPV test and a Pap test together, every 5 years.

Thank you for taking the time to come here today!

We should all be proud of ourselves for making the time to talk about our health.

Remember: the most important thing you can do to protect yourself from cervical cancer is to get screened regularly.

Get a Pap test every 3 years. Or get an HPV test, or an HPV test and a Pap test together, every 5 years.

Before you go, please complete two forms and leave them with me:

1. A **Contact Sheet**, so I can check in with you in the next few weeks to talk about what we learned here today.
2. An **Evaluation Form**, so you can share your thoughts about today's session. Please be honest! It will help me make sessions better in the future.

Hand out a **Contact Sheet** and **Evaluation Form** to each participant. Collect them before you leave.

- ▶ If you are scheduling screening appointments on site, hand out an **Appointment Sheet** to each participant.
- ▶ If you are not scheduling screening appointments, hand out a **Resource Sheet** and a **Fact Sheet** to each participant.