

# Do you need cervical cancer screening services?

## *What you should know:*

Each year, North Carolina women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and some die from the condition. The majority of these deaths occur in women over 45.

Don't let that happen to you. No one should die from cervical cancer. When it is detected early, most deaths from cervical cancer can be prevented through appropriate treatment.

Most cervical cancers develop over a relatively long period of time, during which abnormal tissue can be easily detected through a Pap test. Women typically do not have symptoms until abnormal cervical cells become cancerous. Then, the most common symptom is abnormal vaginal bleeding.

Almost all cervical cancer deaths could be prevented by a combination of routine Pap tests and appropriate follow-up of abnormal screening results.

***Don't wait until it's too late – get screened today!***

The North Carolina Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP) provides free or low-cost cervical cancer screenings and follow-up as needed to eligible women in North Carolina.

## **Who is eligible for BCCCP?**

Women aged 21-64 who meet the following criteria:

- have a household income at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty level;
- are uninsured or underinsured; and
- are without Medicare Part B, Medicaid or Title X Family Planning Services.

## **What services are available?**

- Cervical cancer screenings (Pap tests, HPV tests)
- Diagnostic procedures, as indicated (colposcopies and cervical biopsies)
- Medical consultations

## **What are you waiting for?**

To find a local BCCCP provider near you, call **919-707-5300** or visit <https://bcccp.ncdhhs.gov/Eligibility.asp>.

## **Risk factors**

Research has found several risk factors that may increase your chances of getting cervical cancer, including:

- HPV Infection - Some strains of HPV (human papillomavirus) are high-risk and can cause cervical cancer or abnormal cell changes of the cervix.
- Lack of regular Pap tests - Cervical cancer is more common among women who do not have regular Pap tests. The Pap test helps doctors find precancerous cells. Treating precancerous cell changes often prevents cancer.
- HIV Infection or weakened immune system
- Age - Occurs most often in women over 40
- Sexual History - Many sexual partners
- Smoking - Women who smoke are about twice as likely as non-smokers to get cervical cancer.
- Oral Contraceptives - Long-term use
- Family history of cervical cancer - Cervical cancer may run in some families. If your mother or sister had cervical cancer, your chances of developing the disease are increased by 2 to 3 times.

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## What is a Pap test?

A Pap test is a quick and simple, generally painless, test identifying cancer cells or other changes in and around your cervix. During a pelvic exam, the doctor or nurse inserts a speculum into your vagina and uses a swab or brush to collect cells from your cervix. Those cells are then sent to a lab to be checked for abnormalities.

## What is the HPV test?

The HPV test looks for the human papilloma virus that can cause cell changes on the cervix.

## Tips for getting a Pap test

Here are some things you can do to make your Pap test more accurate:

- Try not to have the test during your period.
- Do not douche for 48 hours before the test.
- Do not have sex for 48 hours before the test.
- Do not use tampons, birth control foams, jellies or other vaginal creams or medicines for 48 hours before the test.

## What if my results are abnormal?

Changes in your cervix may result in an abnormal Pap test. Abnormal Pap test results do not always mean you have cancer. Infections can also cause abnormal Pap results. Any change in your cervix can be found early and followed up with care, even if the abnormality is not cancerous.

## Screening recommendations

The North Carolina Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program recommends that all women from ages 21 to 65 talk to their health care providers about receiving cervical cancer screening.

*For more information about NC BCCCP, please call 919.707.5300 or visit <https://bcccp.ncdhhs.gov/Eligibility.asp>.*

## Additional Resources

### American Cancer Society

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)  
800.227.2345 or  
TTY 866.228.4327

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical)

### National Cancer Institute

[www.cancer.gov/cancer\\_information/cancer\\_type/cervical/](http://www.cancer.gov/cancer_information/cancer_type/cervical/)  
800.422-6237 or  
TTY 800.332.8615

### National Women's Health Information Center

800.994.9662 or  
TDD 888.220.5446

### NC Comprehensive Cancer Program

919.707.5300