

Cervical Disorders

Your Cervix

The cervix is the lower, narrow part of the uterus (womb). The cervix connects the uterus to the vagina (birth canal).

The surface of the cervix is covered in a thin layer of cells that grow all the time.

These cells can go through changes. Most of them are not cancer and will go away on their own. Sometimes changes can make these cells look abnormal.

Types of Cervical Disorders

Cervicitis

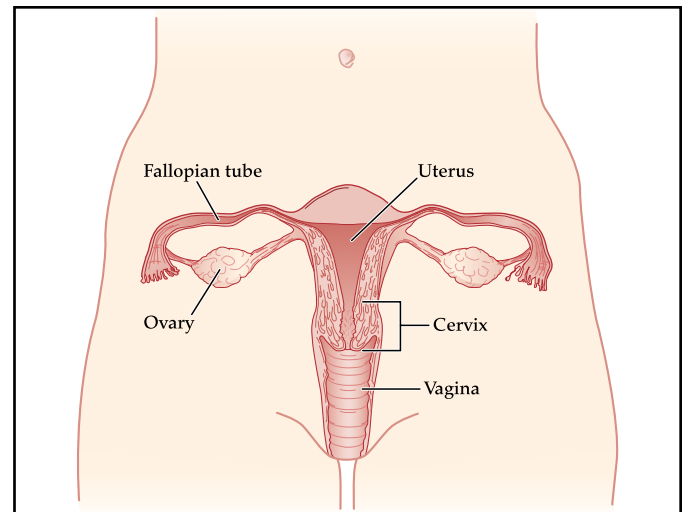
Cervicitis is inflammation of the cervix that may or may not have symptoms. It is very common in women and can be caused by:

- an infection
- a forgotten tampon
- devices used on or in the cervix such as a pessary (a stiff ring inserted into the vagina to support the uterus), or a cervical cap or diaphragm (types of birth control).

In some cases, the cause may not be found.

Symptoms of cervicitis may include:

- foul-smelling or unusual vaginal discharge
- vaginal bleeding
- pelvic pressure
- painful sexual intercourse
- no symptoms.



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The cervix is part of your reproductive system.

Dysplasia

Dysplasia happens when there is a change in the cells of the cervix. Normal cells begin to be replaced by abnormal cells.

Not all abnormal cells are cancer. Some changes can turn into cancer cells if they are not found and treated early.

There are four levels of dysplasia, based on how abnormal the cells appear: mild, moderate, severe, or carcinoma in situ.

You may be at risk of dysplasia or cervical cancer if you:

- have or have had genital warts
- have multiple sexual partners
- first had sex at a young age

(over)

- smoke. Smoking can affect your body's ability to fight off viruses such as human papillomavirus (HPV).
- are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Genital warts

Some people may get genital warts (condyloma) that are caused by HPV. These are single or multiple bumps that are found in the genital area. They can also be cauliflower shaped.

If HPV causes genital warts or dysplasia these both can be treated.

Polyps

Polyps are extra tissue growths that can be found on the cervix. They are benign (not cancerous) and can vary in size. Polyps are often found during a pelvic exam or colposcopy.

Cervical cancer

Cervical cancer is cancer that is found in the tissues of the cervix. The most common cause is HPV. Most women who have HPV will not get cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer may not have any early signs or symptoms. Possible symptoms of cervical cancer are pelvic pain or vaginal bleeding. These symptoms may also be caused by other conditions.

Cervical cancer can be found with regular Pap tests.

Diagnosing Cervical Disorders

- **Pap test:** A test used to find cell changes in the cervix. This test can find cervical cancer early when it is easier to treat and cure.
- **colposcopy:** An exam that allows your health care provider to look closely at your vagina or cervix when you have had an abnormal Pap test or if your health care provider would like to examine your vagina or cervix for other conditions such as vaginal bleeding, genital warts, cervicitis (inflammation of the cervix) or pain.
- **biopsy:** A biopsy is when a piece of tissue is gently removed from your cervix.

Treatment

The key to treating cervical disorders is early detection. It is important to have pelvic exams and Pap tests when recommended to find any changes early when it is easier to treat.