

**Division of Chronic Disease, Primary Care, and Rural Health-
Comprehensive Cancer Control** January 2025



Cervical Cancer Toolkit



Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, also sometimes referenced as Cervical Health Awareness Month, takes place nationally every year in January. Here are five easy steps to take to promote cervical cancer screening and HPV vaccination!

1. USE SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGING TO ENCOURAGE CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING. CONSIDER ONE OF THESE EXAMPLES:

- a. Annual wellness exams are important for maintaining good health. Start conversations with your healthcare provider to help you understand your risks for certain diseases and detect any problems early.
- b. January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. Set an example to those in your life by getting your annual wellness exam. Encourage those in your life to do the same!
- c. Screening is important in the prevention and early detection of breast and cervical cancers. It's equally important to understand your risks. Risks you can change such as being more physically active and excessive alcohol use, and ones that you can't change, like getting older and family history. Talk with your healthcare provider about your risks and find the screening that is right for you.
- d. The Indiana Breast and Cervical Cancer Program can support low-income women 30 and over to pay for cervical cancer screening. Contact 317-233-7901 for more information.

2. USE THESE TOOLS TO INCREASE HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS INFECTION VACCINATIONS

- a. Protect your child from certain cancers later in life with HPV vaccine at age 11-12 years old. Visit the Indiana Department of Health's [Child and Teen Immunizations](#) page for more information and resources.
- b. Visit [Indiana Immunization Coalition](#) for more vaccination information for the state of Indiana.

3. ENCOURAGE CLINICIANS TO REVIEW EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR HPV VACCINATION AND SHARE THAT INFORMATION WITH PARENTS

- a. [Materials](#) for healthcare professionals and their office staff.
- b. [Materials](#) for parents to help them understand the importance of vaccinating their children.

4. SUPPORT CERVICAL CANCER SURVIVORS

- a. Review the [free audio program](#) provided by the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship.

- b. Provide survivors and their caregivers with a link to a [Gynecologic cancer Awareness Month](#) toolkit which is full of helpful information and resources.
- c. Link to the option 3/MA 12 program if treatment for cancer is needed for low income (under 200% of poverty level) by calling 317-607-8393.

5. STAY CURRENT ON CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION, SCREENING, AND TREATMENT BY REVIEWING THESE RESOURCES

- a. American Cancer Society (ACS)
 - i. [Cervical Cancer](#)
- b. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - i. [Cervical Cancer](#)
- c. Indiana Cancer Consortium (ICC)
 - i. [Cervical Cancer](#)
- d. American Society of Clinical Oncology
 - i. [Cancer Treatment and Survivorship Care Plans](#)

WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?

The cervix is part of the female reproductive system – connecting the uterus to the vagina (or birth canal). Cervical cancer is an abnormal growth of cells on the cervix, or an abnormal growth of cells that began in the cervix. Cervical cancer is almost 100 percent preventable through regular screening, avoidance of controllable risk factors, and vaccination against the human papillomavirus (HPV).¹

Signs and symptoms of early-stage cervical cancer:

- Vaginal bleeding after sex
- Vaginal bleeding after menopause
- Vaginal bleeding between periods or periods that are heavier or longer than normal
- Vaginal discharge that is watery and has a strong odor or that contains blood
- Pelvic pain or pain during sex

Signs and symptoms of advanced cervical cancer:

- Difficult or painful bowel movements or bleeding from the rectum when having a bowel movement
- Difficult or painful urination or blood in the urine
- Dull backache
- Swelling of the legs
- Pain in the abdomen
- Feeling tired²

DIAGNOSIS

If you have symptoms or screening test results that suggest the possibility of cervical cancer, your doctor will do follow-up tests to find out if it is due to cancer or some other cause. They will usually start by asking about your personal and family medical history and by doing a physical exam, which will include a pelvic exam and rectovaginal exam. They may recommend diagnostic tests to find out if you have cervical cancer, and if so, whether it has spread to another part of the body. The results of these tests will also help you and your doctor plan treatment.³

HOW IS CERVICAL CANCER DIAGNOSED?

Colposcopy: Colposcopy is a procedure in which the health care provider inserts a speculum to gently open the vagina and view the cervix. A vinegar solution will be applied to the cervix to help show abnormal areas. The health care provider then places an instrument called a colposcope close to the vagina. It has a bright light and a magnifying lens and allows the health care provider to look closely at the cervix. A colposcopy usually includes a biopsy.³

Biopsy: Biopsy is a procedure in which a sample of tissue is removed from the cervix so that a pathologist can view it under a microscope to check for signs of cancer.³

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT CERVICAL CANCER?

Cervical cancer is highly preventable and highly curable if caught early. Nearly all cervical cancers could be prevented by HPV vaccination, routine cervical cancer screening, and appropriate follow-up treatment when needed.⁴

HPV Vaccination: HPV vaccination is a safe and effective way to help prevent cervical cancer. Gardasil 9 is the FDA-approved vaccine for females and males aged 9 to 45 in the United States. Gardasil 9 is approved to prevent precancers and cancers caused by seven cancer-causing HPV types (16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52, and 58) and to prevent genital warts caused by HPV types 6 and 11. The HPV vaccine does not treat an existing HPV infection. Timing of HPV vaccination is important to consider. The HPV vaccine offers the most protection when given before a person becomes sexually active. Those who are already

sexually active may benefit less from the vaccine. This is because sexually active people may have been exposed to some of the HPV types the vaccine targets.⁴

Cervical Cancer Screening: Two widely used screening tests are HPV tests and cytology tests (also known as Pap test or Pap smear). These tests can find high-risk HPV infections and abnormal cell changes and precancers that can be treated before they turn into cancer. So, it is important for people with a cervix to have regular screening tests starting in their 20s. For cervical cancer screening to be effective, people need to get timely screening and follow up of abnormal test results. Because of social, environmental, and economic disadvantages, certain groups may have difficulty accessing health care and, as a result, bear a disproportionate burden of cervical cancer.⁴

Condoms: Condoms, which prevent some sexually transmitted diseases, can decrease the risk of HPV transmission. However, they do not completely prevent it. Therefore, exposure to HPV is still possible in areas that are not covered by the condom.⁴

RISK FACTORS

HPV infection causes cervical cancer. Long-lasting (persistent) infection with high-risk types of human papillomavirus (HPV) causes virtually all cervical cancers. Two high-risk types, HPV 16 and HPV 18, cause 70% of cervical cancers worldwide.

Nearly all people who are sexually active will become infected with HPV at some point in their lives. Most HPV infections go away on their own within a year or two as the immune system controls the infection. These short-term infections do not cause cancer. When a high-risk HPV infection lasts for years, it can lead to changes in the cervical cells, resulting in a precancerous lesion. If the precancerous lesion is not found and removed, it may eventually develop into cervical cancer.

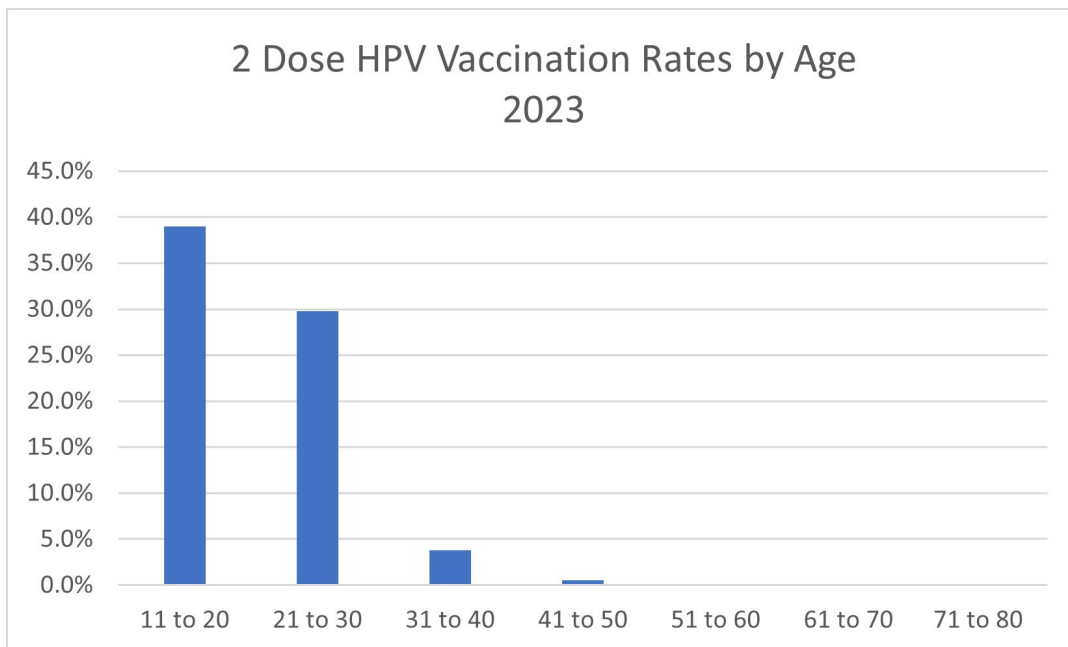
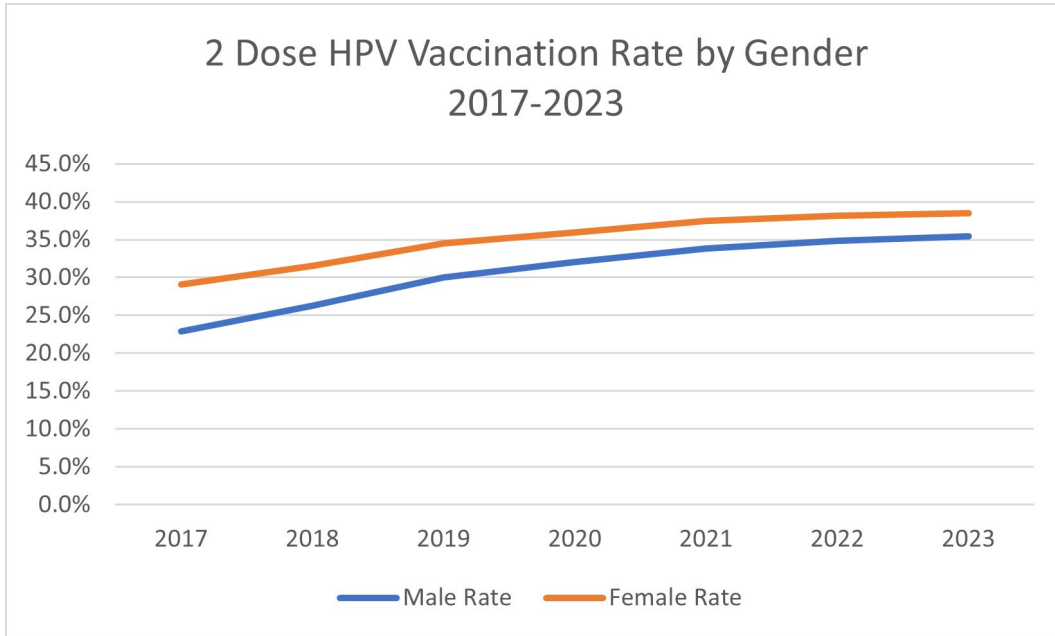
People who become sexually active at a young age, especially before age 18, or have multiple sexual partners are more likely to become infected with a high-risk type of HPV.⁴

Factors that increase the risk that an HPV infection will cause cancer:

- Having a weakened immune system
- Smoking or breathing in secondhand smoke
- Reproductive factors

- Obesity⁴

HPV VACCINATION RATES IN INDIANA



INCIDENCE AND MORTALITY
Indiana Cervical Cancer Incidence and Mortality 2011-2020

	Cervical Cancer Incidence		Cervical Cancer Mortality	
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Rate</i>
White Non-Hispanic	2,256	8.2	891	3.1
Black Non-Hispanic	282	8.9	127	4.0
Hispanic	121	8.8	37	2.7

As shown in the table above in Indiana, Cervical Cancer Incidence is higher in both Black and Hispanic women compared to White women. Similarly, Black women have the highest Cervical Cancer mortality rate of all other races and ethnicities. This is similar to many other types of cancers in which cancer disparities are seen.

Cervical Cancer Incidence Per County 2006-2020

County	Count	Rate
Indiana	3,984	8.02
Adams	9	3.73U
Allen	220	8.15
Bartholomew	49	7.95
Benton	6	8.99U
Blackford	11	12.41U
Boone	35	7.27
Brown	6	5.15U
Carroll	10	6.04U
Cass	22	7.84

Clark	72	8.17
Clay	25	12.47*
Clinton	24	10.40
Crawford	8	9.56U
Daviess	21	9.98
Dearborn	34	9.01
Decatur	9	4.78U
DeKalb	30	8.82
Delaware	70	9.06
Dubois	8	2.37U
Elkhart	142	9.56*
Fayette	14	8.32
Floyd	45	7.80
Fountain	14	11.44
Franklin	8	4.98U
Fulton	11	6.76U
Gibson	16	7.04U
Grant	35	6.32
Greene	27	11.15
Hamilton	88	3.96*
Hancock	34	5.90
Harrison	18	6.11U
Hendricks	71	6.15*
Henry	36	9.72
Howard	54	9.06
Huntington	24	8.66
Jackson	34	10.70
Jasper	17	7.63U

Jay	16	9.20U
Jefferson	27	10.65
Jennings	24	12.15*
Johnson	70	6.34*
Knox	27	11.22
Kosciusko	46	7.79
LaGrange	19	8.37U
Lake	390	9.84*
LaPorte	78	9.86
Lawrence	20	5.40
Madison	86	8.49
Marion	580	8.10
Marshall	20	5.91
Martin	8	8.94U
Miami	28	11.13
Monroe	55	6.34
Montgomery	19	5.95U
Morgan	42	7.98
Newton	13	12.21U
Noble	41	11.89*
Ohio	^	^
Orange	19	10.74U
Owen	15	9.01U
Parke	23	15.44*
Perry	9	5.56U
Pike	13	14.4U
Porter	99	7.29
Posey	14	6.60U

Pulaski	13	12.40U
Putnam	29	11.40
Randolph	18	8.79U
Ripley	21	9.03
Rush	10	8.16U
St. Joseph	143	7.52
Scott	10	5.50U
Shelby	23	6.28
Spencer	10	5.74U
Starke	19	10.89U
Steuben	21	8.18
Sullivan	12	8.18U
Switzerland	8	9.34U
Tippecanoe	87	7.99
Tipton	6	5.20U
Union	5	8.38U
Vanderburgh	95	6.75
Vermillion	17	13.55U
Vigo	73	9.95
Wabash	18	7.29U
Warren	^	^
Warrick	27	6.06
Washington	20	9.52
Wayne	76	14.53*
Wells	11	4.71U
White	19	9.72U
Whitley	30	11.57*

Data Source: Indiana State Cancer Registry

Excludes in situ and benign cancers

Rates are Age-adjusted per 100,000 people to the US Standard 2000 Population

**Rate is statistically significantly higher or lower than state rate ($p < 0.05$)*

^ Suppressed due to low counts

U Rates for cases less than 20 are statistically unstable

CERVICAL CANCER IN INDIANA

National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP): To find out if you qualify for free or low-cost breast and cervical cancer screening services in Indiana and where to get screened, contact [Indiana Breast and Cervical Cancer Program](#).

REFERENCES

1. <https://indianacancer.org/resources/cervical-cancer/>
2. <https://www.cancer.gov/types/cervical/symptoms>
3. <https://www.cancer.gov/types/cervical/diagnosis>
4. <https://www.cancer.gov/types/cervical/causes-risk-prevention>
5. <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/hcp/educational-materials.html#office>
6. <https://indianacancer.org/resources/cervical-cancer/>
7. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical/index.htm>