

5 minutes might save your life

HOW TO SPOT CERVICAL CANCER

Vijaya was diagnosed with
cervical cancer in 2020



The first step to being able to spot any cancer symptoms is to know your body and what is normal for you.

What is the cervix?

The cervix is also known as the neck of the womb, it connects the bottom of the womb to the vagina and is the shape of a doughnut. The cervix is where a sample of cells is taken from with a soft brush during routine cervical screening tests.



Nearly 3,300

women and people with gynae organs are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year.

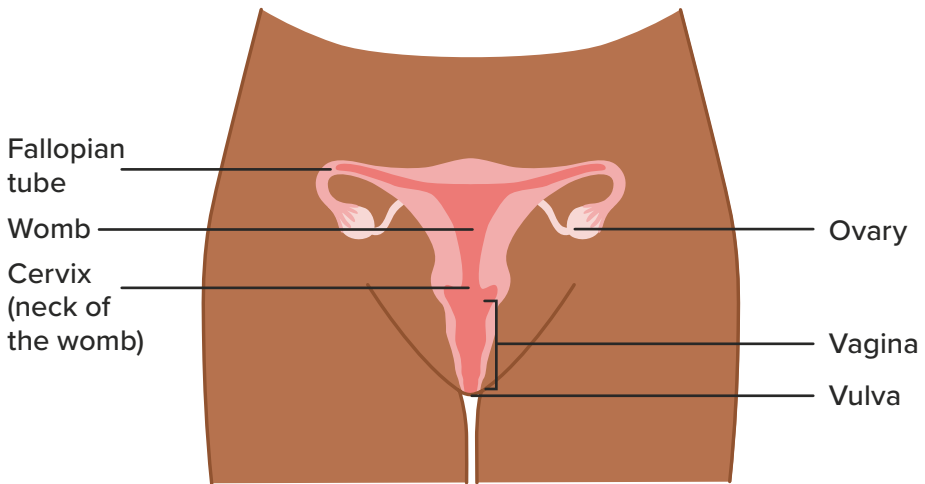


Cervical cancer can affect anyone with a cervix at any age

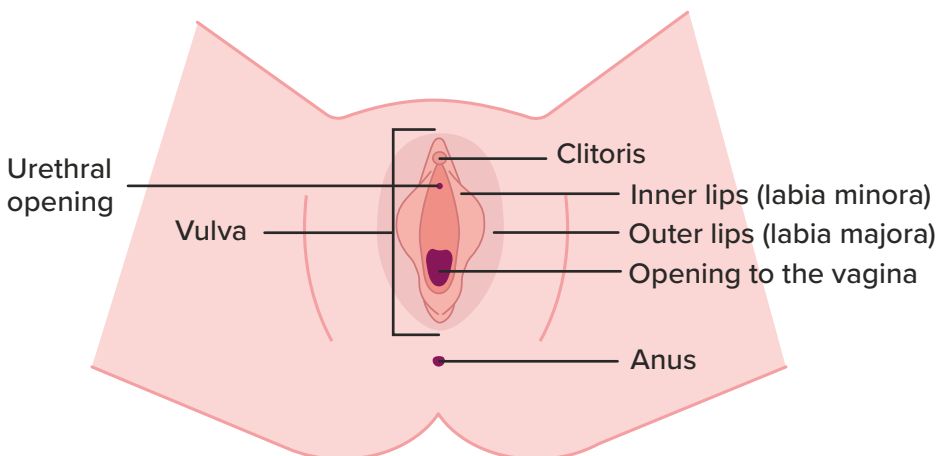
but is most common between the ages 35 and 39.

The reproductive system

You may or may not have been taught about the gynaecological organs (female reproductive system) at home or at school, but it is never too late to learn about our bodies, and how we can look after our health.



The vulva



Signs and symptoms

The signs and symptoms of cervical cancer aren't always obvious but the most common changes to look out for are:

Unusual vaginal bleeding that is new or different for you, including:

- Vaginal bleeding during or after sex – this is often the first noticeable sign
- Bleeding in-between periods
- Bleeding after the menopause (12 months since your last period).

Other symptoms include:

- Lower back or pelvic pain
- Pain or discomfort during sex
- Changes to vaginal discharge, including a change to smell.

Nearly all (over 99%) cervical cancers are caused by high-risk Human papillomavirus (HPV).

It is a common infection, transmitted through sexual contact, that 1 in 5 people will come into contact with during their lifetime.

Go get checked



If you have any of these symptoms, it is important that you see your GP. It is more likely to be caused by something less serious than cancer, but it is always worth getting them checked, just in case. Cervical screening is a test to prevent cancer, if you have symptoms, you need a GP appointment to discuss other investigations.

Reducing your risk

The earlier cervical cancer is caught, the more treatment options there are available and the best possible chance someone will have of successful treatment. Knowing what to look for and getting any concerning symptoms checked by your GP as soon as possible is really important.

Cervical screening (smear tests)

can prevent cervical cancer by detecting HPV and pre-cancerous changes in the cells of the cervix. These early changes can be monitored and treated to prevent cancer developing. If you're overdue cervical screening you may be invited to order an at home HPV self-testing kit. If you have HPV, you will be asked to attend a cervical screening test at your GP surgery.

The HPV vaccination is offered to boys and girls aged 12-13 in the UK. It can help prevent cervical cancer (and other HPV-related cancers) by significantly reducing the risk of certain types of HPV infection. The vaccine is available for free up until 25 through your GP. Some groups can have it up until the age of 45 from sexual health clinics or privately. For more visit: eveappeal.org.uk/hpv

The vaccine does not prevent all types of HPV, so it is still important to go for cervical screening when invited, and get any symptoms checked with a GP.

Other risk factors include:

Smoking – impairs your immune system's ability to clear HPV effectively and is linked to 1 in 5 cervical cancers.

Long term use of the contraceptive pill – 1 in 10 cervical cancers are linked to being on oral contraceptives for five years or more. However they reduce the risk of ovarian and womb cancer.

Long term immunosuppression – from drugs taken after an organ transplant or for HIV/AIDS can increase the risk of developing cervical cancer by impairing your ability to clear HPV.

Diabetes can lead to an increased risk of developing cervical cancer.

66 **Listen to your body, it deserves to be heard**

Vijaya, who was diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2020

For more information



You can visit our website
for more information
eveappeal.org.uk/cervical

This leaflet is one of a series on the five gynaecological cancers – womb, ovarian, cervical, vulval and vaginal. If you have any questions or concerns about any symptoms you are having we run a **free** and confidential nurse-led information service, called Ask Eve. You can get in touch on **0808 802 0019** or email **nurse@eveappeal.org.uk**



The Eve Appeal is the leading gynaecological cancer charity. To help save lives, we focus on preventing and improving the early diagnosis of womb, ovarian, cervical, vulval and vaginal cancer.

Updated Sept 2026, review due Sept 2029

All information correct at time of publication. Sources available on request.

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Registered company no. 4370087