



CERVICAL CANCER

WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that occurs in the cells of the cervix, which is the lower part of the uterus (womb) and opens into the vagina. Cervical cancer happens when the cells of the cervix change, and grow abnormally. Abnormal changes to the cells of the cervix can also be “pre-cancerous” which means that changes to the cells have started to occur, but have not developed into cancer. Most pre-cancers can be treated if found early through screening.

HISTORY

Since cervical cancer screening has become available, there have been great strides in decreasing the incidence of cervical cancer. Since 1949, the BC Cervical Cancer Screening Program has decreased cervical cancer rates by 70%. In 2013, almost 60% of the cervical cancers in BC occurred in women never screened, or 5 or more years overdue for screening. Although access is improving, rural and remote communities are still challenged daily with accessing health care services.

WHAT IS THE CAUSE?

It is now well known that a long-term (usually many years or more) infection with certain types of the human papilloma virus (HPV) is the primary cause of cervical cancer around the world. HPV is very common and is passed through skin to skin sexual contact. Most sexually active adults will have had an HPV infection at some point in their lives, but most of the time, an HPV infection goes away on its own without a person even knowing they had it. There are certain types of HPV that cause cervical and other cancers, but not all types of HPV are associated with cancer.

An infection with a cancer causing type of HPV needs to present for many years or more for it to cause changes to the cells of the cervix. If these changes to the cells of the cervix are not found or treated, they can lead to cervical cancer.

SOURCES:

<https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/cervical/cervical-cancer/?region=bc>

<https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/cervical/statistics/?region=bc>

<https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/cervical/signs-and-symptoms/?region=bc>



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA



CERVICAL CANCER

is almost entirely preventable

PREVENTION TIPS

Cervical cancer is almost entirely preventable through HPV vaccination, screening and early treatment. It's important to regularly discuss with your doctor or health care provider the best options available for HPV vaccination for you, and to ensure you are routinely screened for cervical cancer.

HOW MANY WOMEN DOES THIS AFFECT?

An estimated 1,350 Canadian women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2020.
An estimated 410 will die from it.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Abnormal cells of the cervix may cause some symptoms. However, there are also cases where little to no symptoms are documented. If you begin to display symptoms, it's important to immediately report your findings to your doctor or health care provider. The following are just some of the reported symptoms of cervical cancer:

- abnormal vaginal bleeding including between periods, after menopause and after sexual intercourse
- abnormal or increased amount of vaginal discharge
- foul-smelling vaginal discharge
- unusually long or heavy periods
- bleeding after a pelvic exam or vaginal douching
- pain during sexual intercourse
- difficulty urinating
- difficulty having a bowel movement

SOURCES:

<https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/cervical/cervical-cancer/?region=bc>

<https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/cervical/statistics/?region=bc>

<https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/cervical/signs-and-symptoms/?region=bc>



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

HPV VACCINATION

WHY VACCINATE?

Certain types of HPV are associated with various cancers, including cervical, anal, vulvar and vaginal and head and neck cancers. The HPV vaccine has been shown to be very safe and effective. Ideally, people should receive the HPV vaccine before they have ever been exposed to HPV (before ever having any sexual activity), which is why it's given to kids in school in grade 6 in BC. In women who have never been infected by HPV, the vaccine will prevent almost 100% of cases of cervical cancers. (Immunize BC). Research in BC is already showing that women who have had the HPV vaccine have fewer pre-cancers than women who were not vaccinated.

ARE THEY SAFE?

The HPV vaccine covers certain types of HPV, which can prevent almost 100% of cervical cancers. The vaccine has been researched for many years and millions of doses around the world have been given. The vaccine is considered safe with benefits outweighing the risks. In addition, the safety of the vaccine continues to be monitored throughout the world.

IS IT SAFE FOR PREGNANT AND BREASTFEEDING WOMEN?

As with many other vaccines, HPV vaccines are not recommended for use in pregnancy because the safety of the vaccines in pregnancy is unknown. However, if a pregnant woman happens to receive the HPV vaccine, it is important to note that the vaccine has not been shown to cause any harm to the baby. The HPV vaccine may be administered to breastfeeding women.

SHORT AND LONG TERM SIDE EFFECTS

Redness, swelling and soreness in the arm where the vaccine was given is fairly common. Fever, fatigue, headache, and muscle or joint aches may also occur. Serious side effects to the HPV vaccine are extremely rare. However, if you do start experience any severe changes or changes with your breathing, please dial 9-1-1 or go to your nearest emergency room.

DOES THIS PROMOTE SEXUAL ACTIVITY?

There has been no suggested evidence that receiving the HPV vaccine leads to earlier sexual activity.

VACCINE HESITANCY

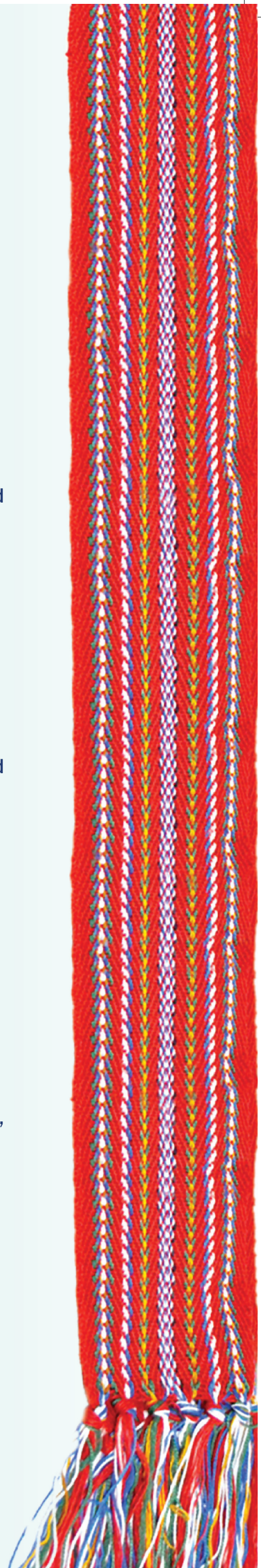
Many of our Métis citizens have chosen to not vaccinate against HPV. In discussions as to why, the consensus appears to be the perceived lack of safety, perceived lack of necessity, lack of knowledge, and concern of an increase in sexual activity in earlier years. It was agreed that with more information on the HPV vaccine, a better-informed decision could be made. It is hoped the information in this document addresses many of the concerns people have about the HPV vaccine. More information about the vaccine is available in the resources below.

SOURCES:

Racey CS, Albert A, Donken R, et al. Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia Rates in British Columbia Women: A Population-Level Data Linkage Evaluation of the School-Based HPV Immunization Program. J Infect Dis. 2020;221(1):81-90. doi:10.1093/infdis/jiz422
<https://immunizebc.ca/hpv/frequently-asked-questions>



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA



CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING

WHY SCREEN?

Women who do not receive routine screening are at a higher risk for developing cervical cancer. Routine screening can detect pre-cancers that can be treated before they become cancer, or identify cervical cancer early. Cervical cancer rates are lower in BC than in other parts of the world because of cervical cancer screening. Cervical cancer usually has no symptoms but there are cases where abnormal bleeding, abnormal vaginal discharge, pelvic pain, or pain during intercourse have been documented. It's important to ensure you're receiving regular screening as recommended by your health care professional.

WHO SHOULD SCREEN?

All people with a cervix between the ages of 25-69 should screen. Routine screening is recommended every 3 years. If you have always had normal Pap results, you may stop testing at 69 or as advised by your provider. You should continue to screen if you have been through menopause, if you've had only one sexual partner or have been with the same partner for a while, if you've had the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, and/or if you're in a same-sex relationship. It's advisable to always check with your health care provider to ensure you are receiving screening recommended for you.

WHAT'S A PAP?

The Papanicolaou test or Pap test is performed by a health care professional to check the cells of your cervix for any abnormalities. This minimally invasive procedure is performed with an instrument called a speculum, which is placed into the vagina. After you're comfortable, the doctor or health care provider will take a small sample of cells from your cervix and send them to a lab for testing. This procedure is easy, quick and nearly pain free. The results will be sent back to your health care provider when they are ready. It is normal to have some anxiety and worry before, during and after a procedure. Please see your doctor or health care provider for some resources that are available to you.

FALSE RESULTS?

No screening test is perfect. Even under the best conditions, there are some cases where cervical cancer screening results may lead to false-positive or false-negative results. Receiving screening as recommended helps the important thing is to connect with your doctor or health care provider to ensure proper follow-up care is given.

FURTHER TESTING

If any abnormalities are found, you may be recommended to return for another Pap in a few months, or you may require a closer exam of your cervix by seeing a specialist for a colposcopy. It's important to know that this does not mean you have cervical cancer or will develop cervical cancer. Being recommended for additional follow-up ensures you are receiving the care you need to investigate the abnormal cells.



SOURCES:

<http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/screening/cervix/get-screened/what-to-expect>

<https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/cervical/screening/?region=bc>



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

HPV, HPV VACCINE AND CERVICAL CANCER RESOURCES

1,350

An estimated 1,350 Canadian women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2020.

410

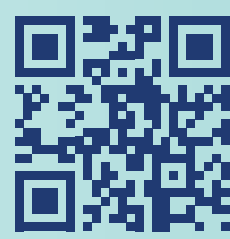
An estimated 410 will die from it.



Métis Nation BC



Canadian Cancer Society



Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada



Immunize BC



BC Cancer



Smart Sex Resource

SOURCES:

<https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/cervical/statistics>



MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA