

# Native American Cancer Research Corporation

## Cervix Health Fact Sheet



- 🍲 Is your cervix healthy?
- 🍲 Cervix cancer affects American Indian women 2 to 5 times more often than women from other racial groups.
- 🍲 It is easy to diagnose and to treat if found in early stages of growth
- 🍲 You can talk with your provider about your cervix cancer risks
- 🍲 Now you know. Now you can.

### What is the cervix?

- 🍲 It is the opening to the womb / uterus

### Symptoms of Cervix Problems

- 🍲 Most women have no symptoms of cervix cancer
- 🍲 Possible Signs may be:
  - ⊕ Unusual bleeding or discharge
  - ⊕ Longer and heavier "moons" or menstrual periods
  - ⊕ Bleeding between periods or after having sex
  - ⊕ Bleeding after menopause
  - ⊕ Pain (lower abdominal area)
  - ⊕ Pain during sex

### What is Cancer of the Cervix?

- 🍲 Cancer (malignant) [ma-LIG-nant]) cells forming in the cervix (the lower part of the womb)
  - ⊕ NOTE: "Cancer of the womb" (uterus / endometrium [EN-doh-MEE-tree-ul]) is not the same as "cancer of the cervix"
- 🍲 "In situ" is early cancer that has not spread to neighboring tissue
- 🍲 "Dysplasia" (dis-PLAY-zha) are cells that look abnormal under a microscope but are not cancer

***Most cervix problems are NOT cancer.  
Please talk with your healthcare provider.***

*Cancer  
knows no  
prejudice and  
affects Native  
women just  
as it does  
other women.*



**Rosanne Wyman  
Mohawk**

### Cervix Cancer & Natives Facts

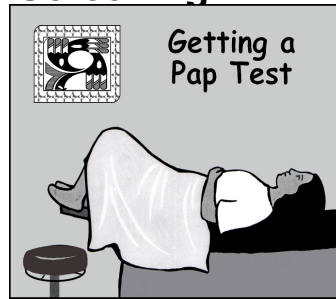
- 🍲 More American Indian women die from cancer of the cervix than do women from any other racial group
- 🍲 There is no reason for any woman of any race to die from cancer of the cervix today.
- 🍲 Cancer of the cervix that is found while in early stages of development can be cured.
- 🍲 Cancer of the cervix is easy to diagnose as long as the woman does pelvic and Pap tests at least every 3 years
  - ⊕ Talk with your healthcare provider

### Some Tips to Help you Get Ready for Your Pap Test

- 🍲 Don't have Pap Test during your moon or period.
- 🍲 Don't douche or use birth control foams, creams, or jellies for two days before the test.
- 🍲 Have your screening within a few weeks of your birthday

## What are Cervix Health Screening Tests?

- 🗑️ The Pap Test can tell if you have abnormal cells or cancer of the cervix early, while it is still easy to cure
- 🗑️ A Pap test is done during a pelvic exam by a trained provider in a health clinic or medical screening van
- 🗑️ The pelvic exam for the provider to see inside the body for changes
- 🗑️ Females need to begin having Paps when they become sexually active or by age 18
- 🗑️ Many American Indian women quit having Pap Tests after their childbearing years; you should NOT do this
- 🗑️ Older women need Pap Tests, including women who have gone through the change of life (menopause [(MEN-uh-pawz)])
- 🗑️ If the test result is abnormal, additional tests will be done
- 🗑️ Women need to continue having an annual test throughout life. Your provider may recommend less frequent tests if:
  - ⊕ You have had 3 “normal” Pap tests in a row within the most recent 5-year period
  - ⊕ Your provider may recommend that you to have a Pap test every 3 years
- 🗑️ Today, most women who have a hysterectomy (hiss-ter-EK-toe-mee) have their cervix removed during surgery
  - 🗑️ This was not as common 30 years ago (if a woman had hysterectomy then, she will need a pelvic exam to find out if she still has a cervix)
  - ⊕ If she does not have a cervix, she does not need a Pap Test.
  - ⊕ If she does have a cervix, she needs a Pap
- 🗑️ Women who had a hysterectomy due to cancer need to follow the provider’s recommendations for a Pap Test
- 🗑️ Early detection of abnormal cells by the Pap allows for treatment before cancer exists

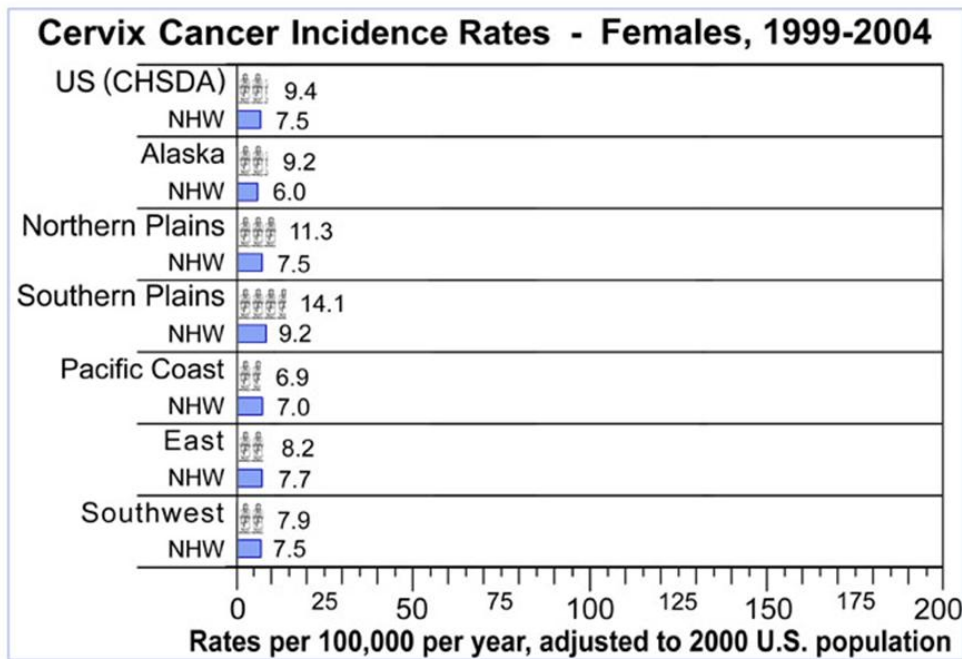


## What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

- 🗑️ A very contagious virus
- 🗑️ Spread through sexual and skin-to-skin contact
- 🗑️ Unprotected sex with more than one partner puts you at risk for HPV
- 🗑️ There are 100 different types of HPV
  - ⊕ Some like HPV types 6 & 11 cause genital warts
  - ⊕ Others like HPV types 16 & 18 causes 70% of all cervix cancer
  - ⊕ Most HPV goes away without causing disease
- 🗑️ Most people have no noticeable symptoms and do not know they have it
- 🗑️ There is treatment for HPV, but there is no cure.
  - ⊕ Treatments can relieve symptoms of genital warts.
  - ⊕ Note: the vaccine may help prevent 70+% of cervix cancer. It is not a cure-all.
  - ⊕ About 30% of Northern Plains women with cancer of the cervix have HPV, but NOT types 16 and 18

## What is the HPV Vaccine?

- 🗑️ Preventing sexually transmitted HPV infection should prevent cancer of the cervix
- 🗑️ 9-13 year old girls who are not yet sexually active are the primary group to receive the vaccine
- 🗑️ Young women, boys & young men may also receive the vaccine
  - ⊕ It costs between \$400-\$600
  - ⊕ Two doses are needed to complete the vaccine
- 🗑️ The female still needs to have Paps (the vaccine will NOT replace the need for Paps)

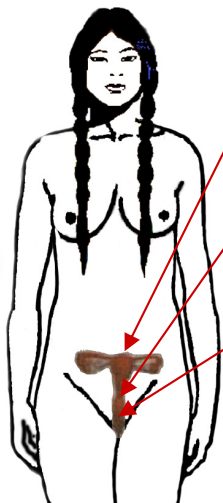


## Legend

- CHSDA: IHS Contract Health Service Delivery Area
- NHW: Non-Hispanic White
- Alaska: includes *all* of Alaska
- Northern Plains: 11 states: IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MT, NE, ND, SD, WI, WY
- Southern Plains: 3 states: KS, OK, TX
- Pacific Coast: 4 states: CA, ID, OR, WA
- East: 25 states, such as FL, GA, MO, MS, NC, NY, PA, TN
- Southwest; 5 states: AZ, CO, NM, NV, UT

Espey, David K.; Wo, Xiao-Chen; Swan Judith; Wiggins, Charles; Jim, Melissa A.; Ward, Elizabeth; Howe, Holly L.; Ries, Lynn A.G.; Miller, Barry A.; Jemal, Ahmedin; Ahmed, Faruque; Cobb, Nathaniel; Kaur, Judith S.; and Edwards, Brenda K. Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer, 1975-2004, Featuring Cancer in American Indians and Alaska Natives. Cancer [American Cancer Society]. 2007 [11-15-07]; Volume 110: No. 10. **GRAPH MODIFIED BY Rick Clark, Native American Cancer Research**

## Anatomy

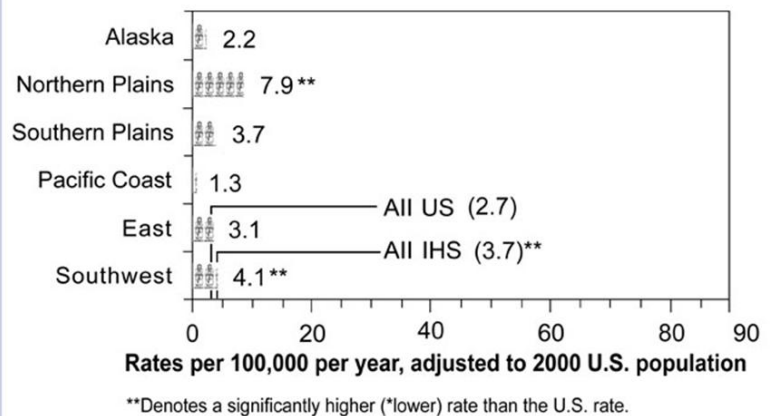


- The uterus or womb is located below your stomach.
- The cervix is located in the lower portion of the womb.
- The cervix opens into the vagina which leads to the outside of the body.

## Native Females Talking about Pelvic Exams & Pap Tests

- "My husband / partner doesn't want me to see a male provider"
- "The tests hurt"
- "I am embarrassed"
- "I never see the same provider at the tribal clinic"
- "I'm not sure what they're looking at"
- "I'm afraid that they're going to sterilize me"
- "I don't want any provider to look at my private parts"
- "I'm afraid they may try to infect me with something"

## Cervix Cancer Death Rates Females, 1999-2003



Haverkamp D, Espey D, Paisano R, Cobb N. *Cancer Mortality Among American Indians and Alaska Natives: Regional Differences, 1999-2003*. Indian Health Service, Rockville, MD, February 2008. **GRAPHS MODIFIED BY: Rick Clark, Native American Cancer Research (note horizontal grid)**

## Why was cancer of the cervix not common among our ancestors?

- They had regular behaviors that were protective against cancer of the cervix; such as:
  - Fewer lifetime sexual partners
  - Saved tobacco for ceremonial uses
  - Less exposure to sexually transmitted diseases

## REMEMBER:

- Cervix cancer is preventable
- Early detection is important





## What “causes” cervix cancer?

- 👉 “Cause” means there is a direct link between the behavior or “factor” eventually resulting in cancer (like habitual use of manufactured tobacco causing lung problems)
  - ⊕ Some types of HPV can “cause” cervix cancer
- 👉 “Risk Factor(s)” usually refers to behaviors / exposures to something that increases your chances of getting cancer (see the shield of health / risks)

**The “shield” of health** protecting against cervix cancer may include daily physical activity, healthy, low fat diet & limited or no alcohol,

**Risks that “damage” the shield of health include:**

1. Early age at first intercourse (16 years old or younger)
2. More than 5 different sexual partners in your whole life
3. Having sex with partners who have had many sexual partners
4. Sexually transmitted diseases (HPV - human papilloma virus) which may also cause genital warts
5. Herpes virus
6. HIV infection
7. Exposure to cigarette smoke (smoking and second hand smoke)
8. Giving birth to more than 4 children
9. Long term use of oral contraceptives
10. Diets low in carotene, vitamins C And E

Partially supported by “Native Navigators and the Cancer Continuum (NNACC) [PI: Burhansstipanov, R24MD002811]



**For more information, contact**  
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## How Can I Help Myself?

- 👉 Talk with you provider about whether or not the HPV vaccine is appropriate for you (still not a cure-all)
- 👉 Get a Pap test every year or as often as your provider suggests
- 👉 If you have a sexually transmitted disease (STD), get treatment
- 👉 Limit the number of sexual partners: Lifetime mutual monogamy or abstinence are the best possibilities for prevention
- 👉 Use condoms (especially latex condoms with nonoxynol-9)
- 👉 Do not use manufactured tobacco habitually and reduce your exposure to second hand smoke



**The shield of health / risks**

**What does the shield below tell you about this woman's cancer risks?**



The holes mean the woman has risks for cervix cancer



Partially supported by Mayo  
Clinic's Spirit of Eagles  
Community Network  
Programs [PI: Kaur: NCI  
U01 CA 114609]