

# Cervical cancer

If cervical cancer is found and treated early, you have a good chance of getting better.

## What is cervical cancer?

- Cervical cancer is when abnormal cells in the lining of the cervix grow out of control.
- There are two main types of cervical cancer named after the types of cells that become cancerous:
  - squamous cell carcinoma (most common)
  - adenocarcinoma (less common).

## How will I know I have cervical cancer?

You can have cervical cancer without noticing anything is wrong. Warning signs may include:

- bleeding between periods, after menopause or after sex
- pain during sex.

If you have any of these problems, see your doctor. You will have some tests to work out if you have cervical cancer.

## What do the test results mean?

The test results will tell the doctor what type of cervical cancer you have, and if the cancer has spread (the stage). This information helps the doctors decide what treatment you need.

**Stage 1** – the cancer is found only in the tissue of the cervix

**Stage 2** – the cancer has spread to the vagina and other tissue near the cervix

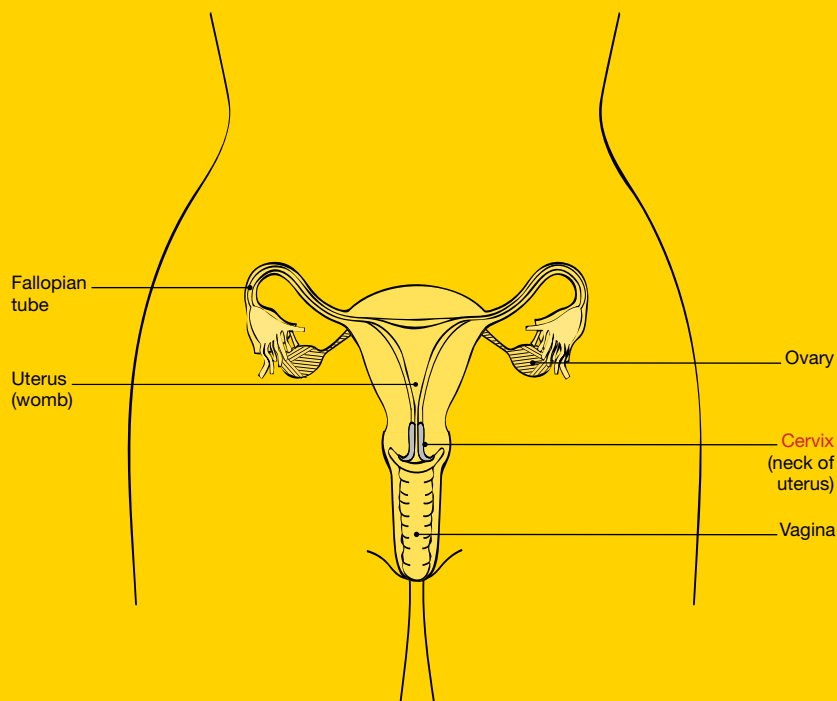
**Stage 3** – the cancer has spread to the tissue on the side of the pelvis

**Stage 4** – the cancer has spread to the bladder or rectum, or beyond the pelvis to the lung, liver or bones

**CERVICAL CANCER**

**A woman's reproductive system**

The picture below shows a woman's reproductive system – the part of the body that helps make a baby. The cervix is part of the reproductive system.



**Fallopian tubes**

Thin tubes that go from the uterus to the ovaries. Every month one of the ovaries releases an egg into the fallopian tube next to it.

**Uterus**

Also called the womb. This is where a baby grows.

**Ovaries**

Two small, oval-shaped organs. This is where eggs are made.

**Cervix**

Also called the neck of the uterus. It connects the lower part of the uterus to the vagina.

**Vagina**

Also called the birth canal. The vagina is the part through which a baby is born, sex happens and period blood flows. The vagina connects the uterus to the outside of the body.

**CERVICAL CANCER**

**What treatment will I need?**

There are different types of treatment for cervical cancer. You may have one or more of these treatments:

- **Cone biopsy** – if found early, some cervical cancers can be removed during a biopsy
- **Surgery** – removes the uterus and cervix. This is called a hysterectomy
- **Radiotherapy** – uses x-rays to kill or injure the cancer cells
- **Chemotherapy** – uses drugs to kill or injure the cancer cells

**How will the treatment affect my body?**

Treatment for cervical cancer can cause problems. Some of the common ones include:

- **Problems with bladder and bowel function** – You may feel like you can't empty your bladder completely or it happens slowly.
- **Periods stop** – Women who have their fallopian tubes removed and who haven't been through menopause will no longer have periods.
- **Swelling of your legs** – This may happen if you had lymph nodes taken out. It is called lymphoedema.

**How do I manage the cancer?**

It is normal for you and your family to have lots of different feelings right now. Talking with your doctor, nurse or health care professional will help answer any questions you may have.

Depending on where you live, you might need to travel for treatment. You can get help to pay for travel and accommodation.

**For more information**

- Call Cancer Council 13 11 20
- Visit [www.cancercouncil.com.au](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au)
- Visit [www.menzies.edu.au/cancer](http://www.menzies.edu.au/cancer)
- For current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cancer-related statistics, see [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)

*This information has been adapted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by Menzies School of Health Research in consultation with a Clinical Advisory Group and an Indigenous Consultation group. Production by Cancer Council.*