



# Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Lawley



## WOMEN'S HEALTH: CERVICAL CANCER

Cervical cancer used to be one of the leading causes of death for women in the United States. However, over the past four decades, these rates have declined significantly due to widespread awareness and use of screenings.

### Causes

The most common form of cervical cancer starts with precancerous changes within the cervix. These changes can lead to cervical cancer if left untreated. Most precancers of the cervix can be avoided by reducing exposure to the human papillomavirus (HPV).

HPV is the name of a group of viruses that includes more than 100 different strains or types. More than 30 of these viruses are sexually transmitted. Most people who become infected with HPV will not have any symptoms and will clear the infection on their own. However, left untreated in women, HPV can lead to cervical cancer.

Other factors that may contribute to the risk of developing cervical cancer include:

- Giving birth to many children
- Having many sexual partners
- Smoking
- Using oral contraceptives
- Having a weakened immune system

### Symptoms

Early symptoms of cervical cancer may not be noticeable. However, some symptoms include vaginal bleeding, unusual vaginal discharge, pelvic pain or pain during sexual intercourse. It is important to remember these symptoms can also be a sign of other problems, but you should still see your doctor and have regular Pap tests to eliminate cervical cancer as a potential cause.

### Prevention

Getting regular Pap tests can save your life. If a Pap test finds precancerous cervical lesions and they are treated early, invasive cervical cancer can usually be prevented and early-stage cancer can be cured. Regular Pap tests decrease your risk for developing cervical cancer because they can detect precancerous cervical lesions at early, treatable stages.

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