

Cervical Cancer Assessment

Cervical cancer is a slow-progression carcinoma related to repeated injuries to the cervix causing normal cervical cells to dysplasia. A history of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), particularly the human papillomavirus (HPV), increases the risk of cervical cancer. Additional risk factors include low socioeconomic status, early sexual activity beginning before 17 years of age, multiple sexual partners, immunosuppression, and smoking. Although pre-cancerous changes are asymptomatic, prevention and early diagnosis is critical for early treatment of precancerous lesions to prevent cancer progression and spread. Vaccines and routine screenings for cervical cancer are available. Clinical manifestations of cervical cancer include leukorrhea, intermenstrual bleeding, pain, and an abnormal Pap smear. Treatment depends on the patient's age, health, and tumor stage. Interventions to remove cancerous tissue include conization, laser treatment, cauterization, and cryosurgery. Other treatments include radiation, chemotherapeutic agents, and hysterectomy.



PLAY PICMONIC

Cause/Mechanism

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Human Puppet-virus

The development of cervical cancer has been linked with injuries to the cervix. Human papillomavirus (HPV) types 16 and 18 account for nearly 70% of all cases of cervical cancer. Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) testing is used to identify HPV types 16 and 18. The rate of cervical cancer is expected to decrease due to the increased use of HPV vaccines.

Assessment

Metrorrhagia

Metro-tampon between periods

During the early stages of cervical cancer, spotting may occur in between normal menstrual periods. As the tumor enlarges while the disease progresses, intermenstrual bleeding becomes heavier and more frequent.

Leukorrhea

Luke-oreo

As cervical cancer progresses, leukorrhea occurs. Initially, the vaginal discharge is thin and watery. Advanced stages of cervical cancer may progress to dark and foul-smelling discharge that indicates infection.

Pain

Pain-bolt

Pain is a late symptom of cervical cancer. As the tumor enlarges, it may press against nerves and initiate a pain response. Other symptoms of advanced cervical cancer include weight loss and anemia. The individual diagnosed with advanced cervical cancer may also develop cachexia, or wasting syndrome characterized by muscle atrophy, fatigue, and weakness.

Abnormal Pap Test

Abnormal Papa Smearf

An abnormal Pap test requires further follow-up to determine the presence of cervical cancer. If minor cervical changes are detected, the woman should have a follow-up Pap test in 4-6 months for 2 years since a large percentage of women experience a spontaneous return to normalcy. If more prominent changes are found, additional diagnostic procedures such as colposcopy and biopsy are performed. A colposcopy helps detect epithelial

abnormalities and suggests areas for biopsies collected for pathologic evaluation. Previously found high grade lesions suggests advanced stages of cervical cancer.

May Be Asymptomatic

Thumbs-up with Maybe

Precancerous changes related to cervical cancer may be asymptomatic. Due to a lack of noticeable symptoms, routine screening is critical for early detection of cervical cancer. As the cancer progresses, symptoms such as leukorrhea and intermenstrual bleeding become evident.

Considerations

HPV Vaccine

Human Puppet-virus Syringe

Cervical cancer is associated with HPV 16 and 18. HPV vaccines, such as Gardasil or Cevaxix, protect against genital warts and cervical cancer. Beginning at age 11, the vaccine is administered in both males and females prior to starting sexual activity.