

ADVANTAGE

Cervical Cancer



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What is the cervix?




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What are the symptoms of cervical cancer?

- 1 Abnormal vaginal bleeding
- 2 Vaginal discomfort or pain
- 3 Bloody or offensive discharge
- 4 Difficulty or pain when urinating
- 5 Lower abdominal pain
- 6 Pain during sexual intercourse

What are the risk factors for cervical cancer?

-  Promiscuous male partners
-  Starting to have unprotected sex at a young age
-  History of sexually transmitted diseases



Questions

for Dr Thapelo Motshudi

1 What is the cervix?

The cervix is the short area of narrowing in the lower half of the uterus, opening into the vagina, and forming part of the birth canal. It has multiple functions, which include facilitating the flow of menstrual blood into the vagina, facilitating childbirth, and producing mucus that can either help to block or facilitate the entrance of sperm into the uterus under various circumstances.

2 What are the symptoms of cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among women. The typical symptoms of cervical cancer can also be caused by other conditions. Some of the more common symptoms are the following:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding
- Vaginal discomfort or pain
- Bloody or offensive discharge
- Difficulty or pain when urinating
- Lower abdominal pain
- Pain during sexual intercourse.

Some of the illnesses that might also have the same symptoms include infections of the vagina and cervix itself, and cancer of the inner lining of the uterus.

3 What are the risk factors for cervical cancer?

The main cause of cervical cancer is infection of the genitals with the human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV is a very common infection, and is mainly transmitted sexually, however it is possible to get it via nonsexual routes, but this is not common. As a result of this, the following factors increase one's risk:

- Starting to have unprotected sex at a young age
- Unprotected sex with multiple partners
- Promiscuous male partners
- History of sexually transmitted diseases
- Increasing age.

In addition, smoking and multiple pregnancies appear to predispose one to cervical cancer. HIV also increases the risk significantly.

4 What is the treatment for cervical cancer?

Prior to commencement of any treatment the cancer needs to be staged, which is to determine the severity of the disease and whether it has spread to other organs. Surgery is the method of treatment for the early stages of the cancer. Once the disease has progressed further, surgery is combined with radiation and chemotherapy. In line with global trends, South Africa implemented a school-based HPV vaccination program in April 2014. The benefits on this rollout will only be felt from around 2034 because it takes about 2 – 4 decades for the effects to be appreciated.