

# Cervical Cancer Screening

**AMIGAS**

# Introduction



## What We'll Talk About

- What is cervical cancer?
- Who can get cervical cancer?
- What is cervical cancer screening?
- Why is it important to get screened?
- How often should we get screened?
- What does it mean to get screened?
- The female reproductive system
- What happens when we get screened?
- Human papillomavirus (HPV)
- What is an HPV test?
- How do we get our screening results?
- Why don't some of us get screened?
- Testimonials
- Final words

# Talking Points for Slide 1

The main things I'd like to talk with you about today are described here in our presentation. Some of this information you may already know, but we can skip those sections and jump ahead. We can go as fast or as slow as you like.

Do you think it is important for us as women to take care of our health? Taking care of our health is very important! We women need to take the time to take care of our health. It's the best gift we can give ourselves and our family.

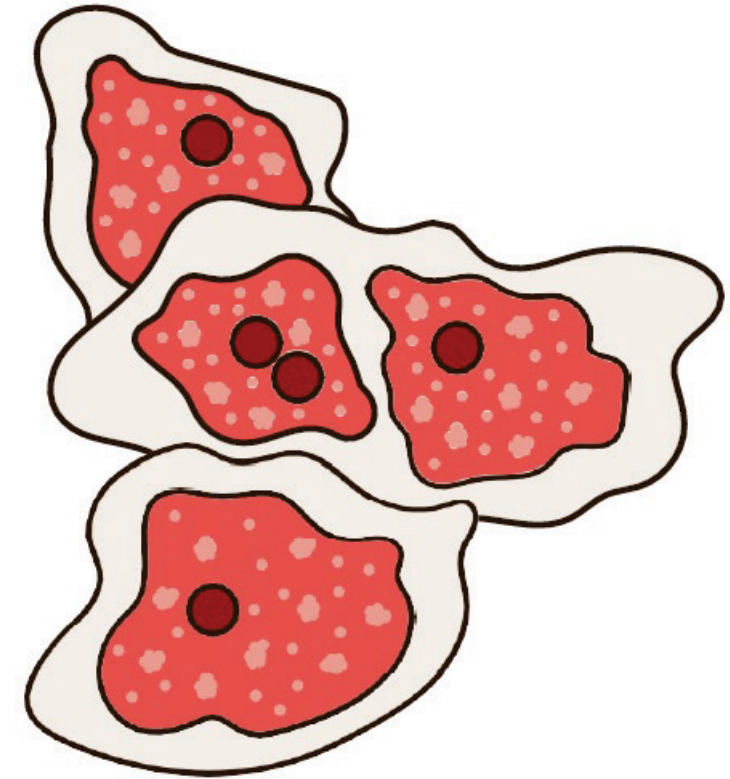
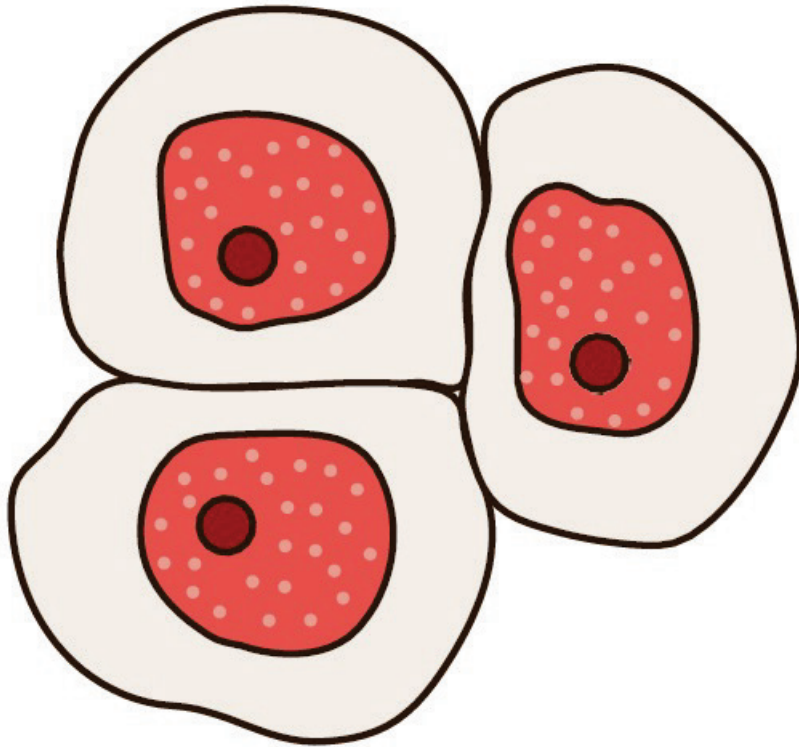
Today I would like to talk to you about cervical cancer and cervical cancer screening.

- Do women in your community talk about cervical cancer screening?
- What have you heard cervical cancer screening?
- Have you ever been screened for cervical cancer?

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# What Is Cervical Cancer?

Normal cells



Cancer cells

# Talking Points for Slide 2

What have you heard about cervical cancer?

- Cells are the basic building blocks of life. All living things are made of one or more cells. These cells are so small we cannot see them with our eyes.
- Cancer happens when these cells grow out of control or are abnormal. They can continue to grow and form a tumor. A tumor can be cancerous (malignant) or not cancerous (benign).
- It is very important to find and treat abnormal cells. If the cells are not treated, they can turn into cancer.
- Cervical cancer happens when abnormal cells grow in the cervix and are not treated. A woman may have abnormal cells and not know it. This is because she may not have any symptoms.
- Cervical cancer is one of the most common cancers in women in the world. It can usually be cured if found early!

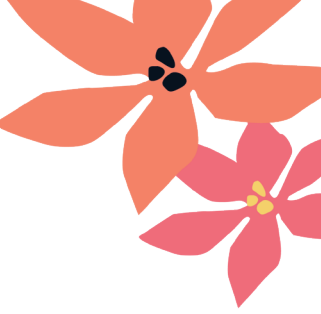
**Tip:** If the participants don't seem interested in the biology of cervical cancer, that's OK. Listen to their responses and skip over details they are not interested in. Just make sure that you share the key messages with them.

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# Who Can Develop Cervical Cancer?

Any woman can develop cervical cancer.

Some women have a higher chance of developing it.



# Talking Points for Slide 3

Who can develop cervical cancer? Any woman can develop cervical cancer. Some women have a higher chance of developing it.

A woman has a higher chance of developing cervical cancer if:

- She is infected with human papillomavirus (HPV). Most cervical cancers are caused by this virus, which is transmitted sexually. HPV infection is very common in both men and women who are sexually active. Most of the time HPV causes no health problems and goes away on its own. But sometimes a woman can be infected with a “high risk” type of HPV that doesn’t go away on its own. In rare cases, an HPV infection that doesn’t go away can develop into cervical cancer.
- She began having sex at an early age.
- She or her partner has had sex with a number of partners in his or her life.
- She smokes cigarettes.


There are other risk factors. I can tell you more.

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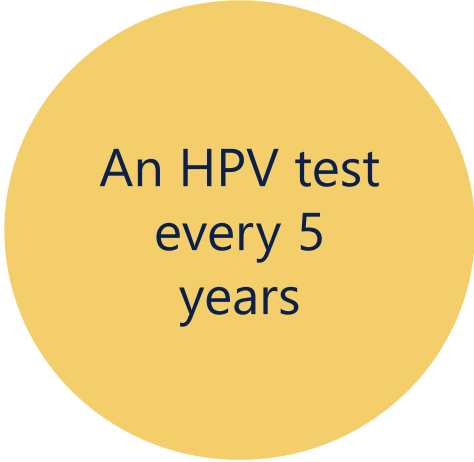
# What Is Cervical Cancer Screening?

If a woman is age 21 to 29, she should get a Pap test every 3 years.

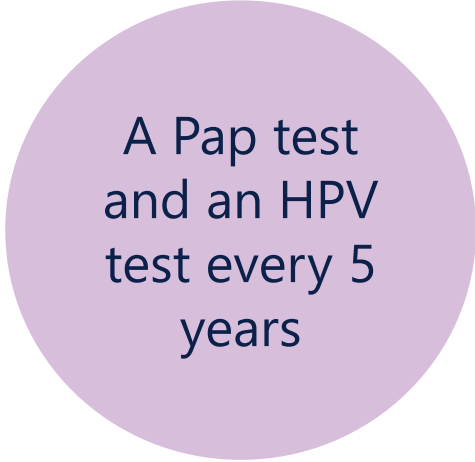
After age 30, a woman has 3 choices:



A Pap test  
every 3  
years



An HPV test  
every 5  
years



A Pap test  
and an HPV  
test every 5  
years



# Talking Points for Slide 4

Let's talk about cervical cancer screening. There are several screening options:

If a woman is age 21 to 29, she should get a Pap test every 3 years.

After age 30, a woman has 3 choices: a Pap test every 3 years, an HPV test every 5 years, or a Pap test **and** an HPV test every 5 years (also known as a co-test).

- A Pap test can find cell changes in the cervix that might become cervical cancer if they are not treated appropriately.
- The HPV test looks for the virus that can cause these cell changes.

Have you ever been screened for cervical cancer? What was it like for you when you got screened?

Provide accurate information where necessary to help women understand their screening options. Reinforce and praise their knowledge.

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# Why Is It Important to Get Screened for Cervical Cancer?

Getting screened can help us stay healthy. It is an important part of our health.

- A Pap test can find abnormal cells in the cervix. If they are found and treated early, cancer can be prevented!
- The HPV test looks for the virus that can cause cell changes in the cervix.



# Talking Points for Slide 5

Let's talk about why it's important to get screened.

Getting screened can help us stay healthy. It is an important part of our health.

A Pap test can find abnormal cells in the cervix. If they are found and treated early, cancer can be prevented!

The HPV test looks for the virus that can cause cell changes in the cervix.

Often women who have these abnormal cells feel no symptoms. We can't always feel these changes in our bodies. That's why it's important for us to get screened regularly.

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# How Often Should We Get Screened for Cervical Cancer?

Who should get screened? Notice the different recommendations for different ages. If a woman is age 21 to 29, she should get a Pap test every 3 years.

After age 30, a woman has 3 choices:

- A Pap test every 3 years.
- An HPV test every 5 years.
- A Pap and an HPV test every 5 years (called co-testing).

**After age 65**, a woman may be able to stop screening **OR** she may need to get screened if she hasn't been screened in awhile and has not had a hysterectomy. She should talk to her doctor.

If a woman has had a **hysterectomy**, in most cases, she will not need to be screened. But she should talk to her doctor about whether she needs to be tested.

# Talking Points for Slide 6

It's important that we get cervical cancer screenings regularly, either through Pap test alone, HPV test alone, or Pap and HPV tests together.

If you only get a Pap test, you should get a Pap test every 3 years from age 21 to 65. Starting at age 30, you can get an HPV test every 5 years. If you get a Pap test and an HPV test together, you can have this combination of tests every 5 years.

We should continue get screened even if we have stopped having babies, no longer have periods (because of menopause/change of life), and even if we have stopped having sexual relations.

After age 65, a woman may be able to stop screening **OR** she may need to get screened if she hasn't been screened in awhile and has not had a hysterectomy. She should talk to her doctor.

If a woman has had a hysterectomy, in most cases, she will not need to be screened. But she should talk to her doctor about whether she needs to be tested.



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# What Does It Mean to Get Screened?

**Screening** means checking for cancer in people who do not have symptoms.

You can be screened for cervical cancer in three ways:

A Pap test, which checks your cervix for abnormal cells that could turn into cervical cancer. A Pap test can also find cervical cancer early, when it is easier to treat.

An HPV test, which can tell you if you have the virus that can cause cervical cancer.

A Pap test and an HPV test combined. This is sometimes referred to as **co-testing**.

# Talking Points for Slide 7

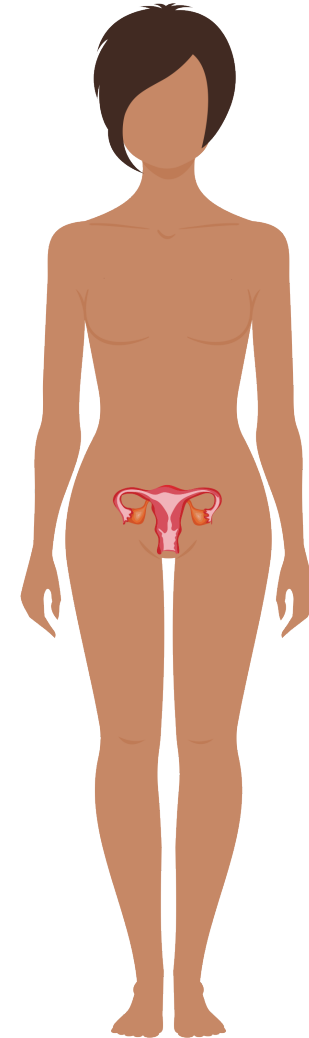
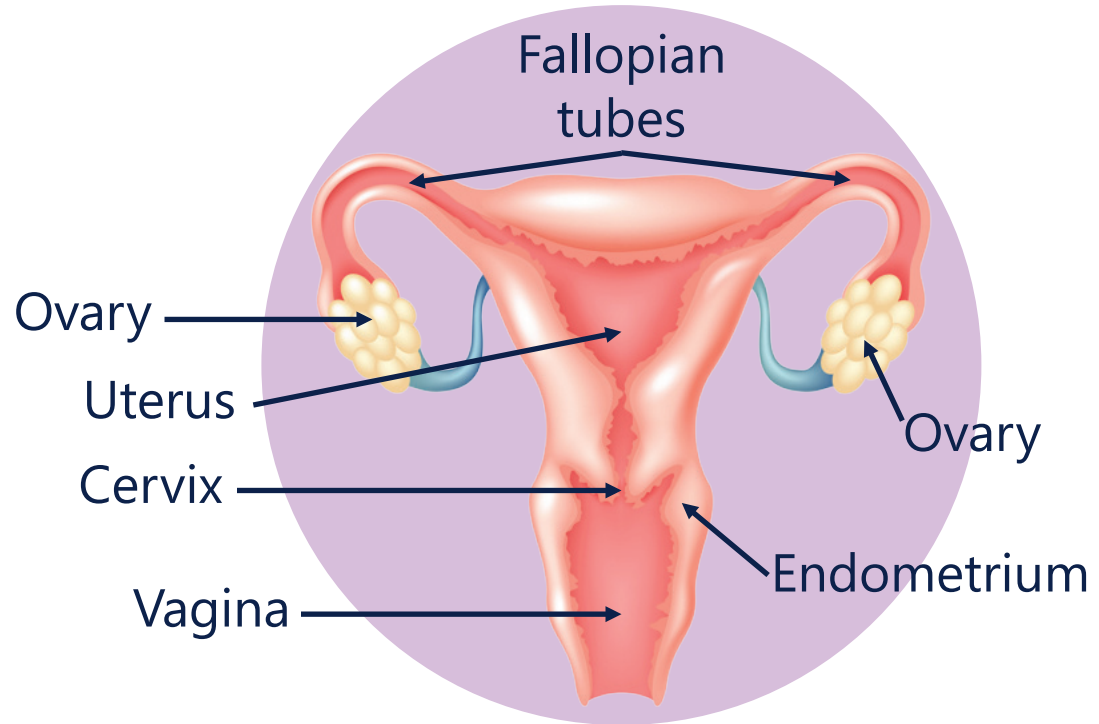
Screening means checking for cancer in people who do not have symptoms.

You can be screened for cervical cancer in three ways:

1. A Pap test, which checks your cervix for abnormal cells that could turn into cervical cancer. A Pap test can also find cervical cancer early, when it is easier to treat.
2. An HPV test, which can tell you if you have the virus that can cause cervical cancer. The cells collected by the doctor will be checked for HPV.
3. A Pap test and an HPV test combined. This is sometimes referred to as co-testing.

Have you ever had an exam like this?

# The Female Reproductive System



- 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.



# Talking Points for Slide 8

It will help us to understand how screening works if we first look at the female body. Here is the female body. We can see the reproductive system enlarged. See where the cervix is at the bottom of the uterus?

Use the following descriptions to talk about the female reproductive system and answer any questions.

**Uterus:** The small, pear-shaped organ in a woman's pelvis. This is where a baby grows when she is pregnant. It is also called the womb.

**Cervix:** The lower, narrow end of the uterus.

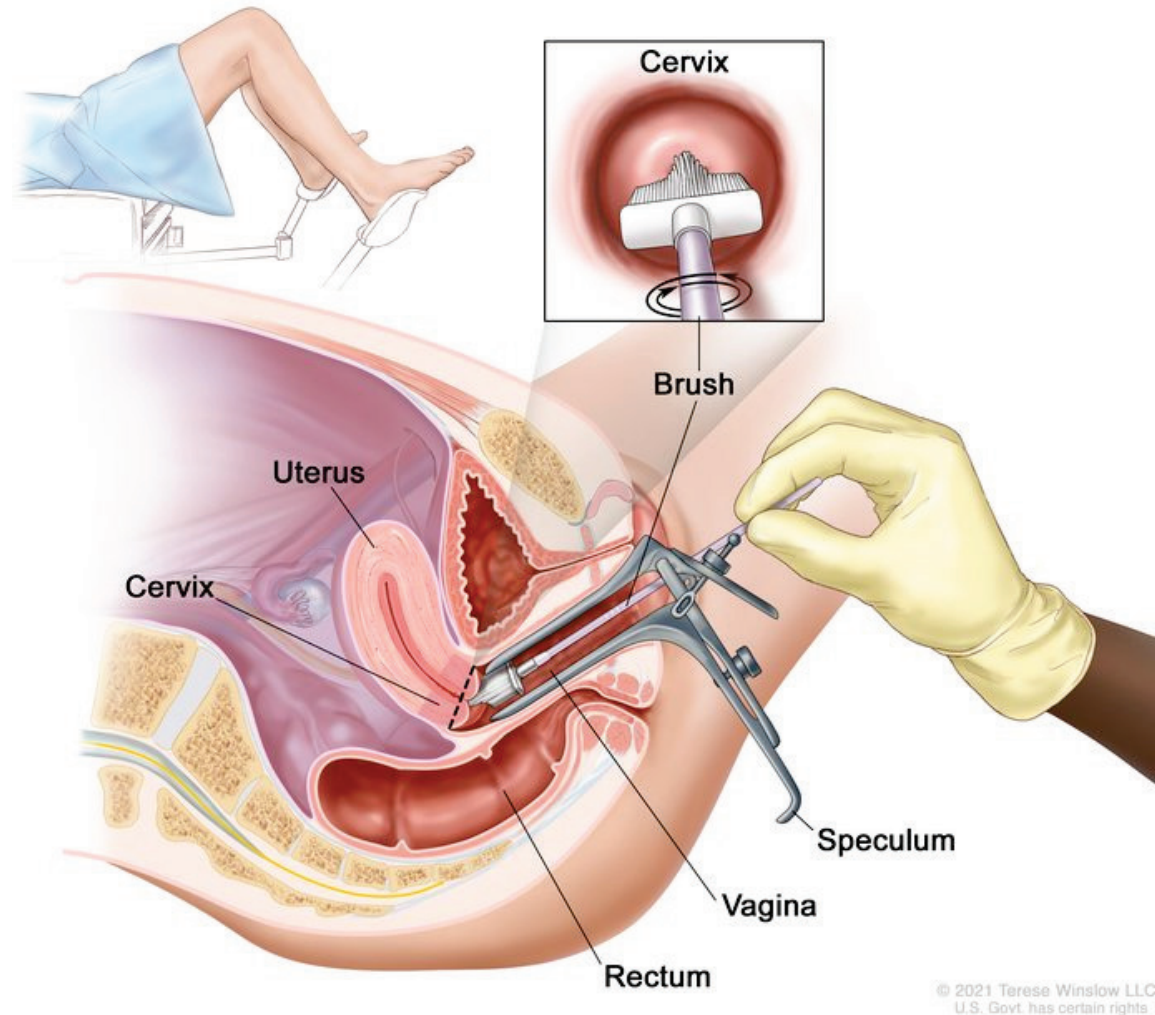
**Endometrium:** The lining of the uterus. The lining comes out every month when a woman has her period.

**Ovary:** The gland where the eggs are formed. There are two ovaries, one on each side of the uterus.

**Fallopian tube:** The tube through which eggs pass from an ovary to the uterus. There is one ovary and one fallopian tube on each side of the uterus.

**Vagina:** The canal that goes from the uterus to the outside of the body. Also called the birth canal.

# What Happens When We Get Screened?



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# Talking Points for Slide 9

A cervical cancer screening test is done at your doctor's office. They take us to an exam room. They ask us to take off our clothes and put on an exam gown. We lie down on an exam table with our knees bent and our feet in foot rests.

**Tip:** Stop and ask the women if they have any questions. If they do, answer them with accurate information. If you are not sure how to respond, tell them that you will get back to them later with an answer. Give the women a chance to make comments and share their own experiences with cervical cancer screening. You can also share your screening experience with them.

The doctor uses a plastic or metal instrument called a speculum. The speculum is put into your vagina and opened up so that the walls of your vagina and cervix can be seen clearly.

Show the speculum if you have one with you.



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## Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Most cervical cancer is caused by human papillomavirus, or HPV.

- You get HPV from having sexual contact with a man or a woman who has the virus.
- HPV infection is very common in people who are sexually active.
- Most of the time, HPV doesn't cause health problems and goes away on its own.
- But sometimes it doesn't go away. Some types of HPV can cause the cells of your cervix to go from normal to abnormal. In rare cases, over a long time—around 10 to 15 years—an HPV infection can cause cervical cancer.
- You can't see or feel these changes happening. That's why screening is important.
- If you're 26 or younger, you can get an HPV vaccine.

# Talking Points for Slide 10

Most cervical cancer is caused by the human papillomavirus, or HPV. HPV is not the same thing as HIV.

There are different types of HPV. Some affect your cervix, and some cause skin warts in the genital area. We're going to talk about the types that affect your cervix.

- You get HPV from having sexual contact with a man or a woman who has the virus.
- HPV infection is very common in people who are sexually active. Many people don't know they have it, so they don't realize they're passing it on.
- Most of the time, HPV doesn't cause health problems and goes away on its own.
- But sometimes it doesn't go away. Some types of HPV can cause the cells of your cervix to go from normal to abnormal. In rare cases, over a long time—around 10 to 15 years—an HPV infection can cause cervical cancer.
- You can't see or feel these changes happening. That's why it's important to get screened. Screening is the only way to find and treat abnormal cells before they turn into cancer.
- If you're under age 26, you can get a vaccine that can keep you from getting the types of HPV that cause cervical cancer.

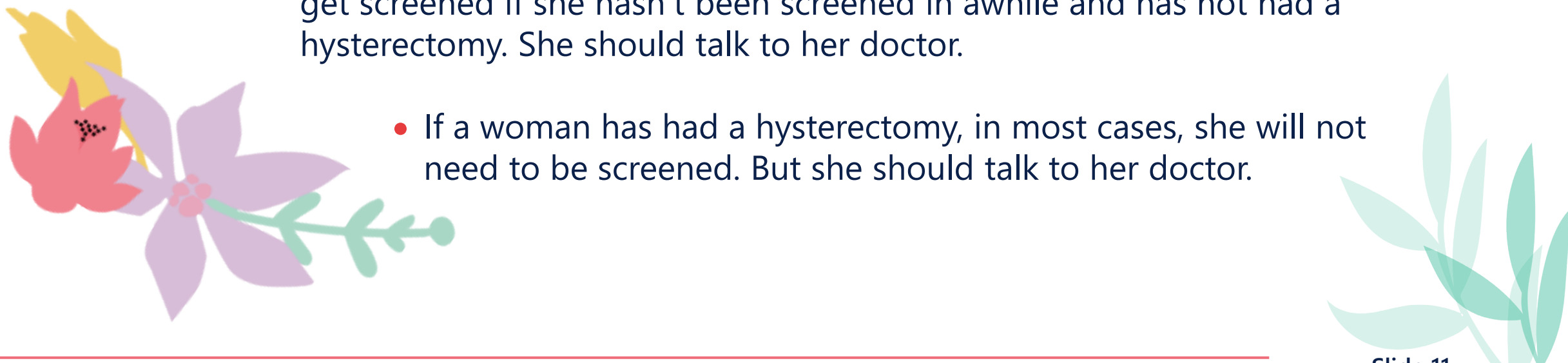
**Note:** HPV vaccination is not recommended for everyone older than age 26 years. However, some adults age 27 through 45 years who are not already vaccinated may decide to get the HPV vaccine after speaking with their doctor about their risk for new HPV infections and the possible benefits of vaccination. HPV vaccination in this age range provides less benefit, as more people have already been exposed to HPV.



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## What Is An HPV Test?

The HPV test looks for the virus that causes most cervical cancers.

- HPV tests are for women 30 and older. These tests are not recommended for women younger than 30.
  - After age 65, a woman may be able to stop screening **OR** she may need to get screened if she hasn't been screened in awhile and has not had a hysterectomy. She should talk to her doctor.
  - If a woman has had a hysterectomy, in most cases, she will not need to be screened. But she should talk to her doctor.
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# Talking Points for Slide 11

HPV is the virus that causes most cervical cancers. The HPV test looks for the virus that can cause cell changes. If you are getting an HPV test, the cells collected from your cervix will be tested for HPV.

- If you get only an HPV test, this is called *primary HPV testing*. If normal, your doctor may tell you that you can wait 5 years until your next screening test.
- If you get an HPV test along with a Pap test, this is called *co-testing*. If both of your results are normal, your doctor may tell you that you can wait 5 years until your next screening test.

HPV tests are for women 30 and older. These tests are not recommended for women under the age of 30.

After age 65, a woman may be able to stop screening **OR** she may need to get screened if she hasn't been screened in awhile and has not had a hysterectomy. She should talk to her doctor.

If a woman has had a hysterectomy, in most cases, she will not need to be screened. But she should talk to her doctor about whether she needs to be tested.



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## How Do We Get Our Screening Results?

It is important to get your results after you have been screened.

You will usually get the results a couple of weeks after your test. If more than two weeks have passed and you have not heard about your results, you should contact the clinic to ask for them.

If the test results are abnormal, your doctor may ask you to return to the clinic for more tests. **Most abnormal test results do NOT mean you have cancer.**



# Talking Points for Slide 12

It is important to get your results after you have been screened. You will usually get the results a couple of weeks after your test. If more than two weeks have passed and you have not heard about your results, you should contact the clinic to ask for them.

If the test results are abnormal, your doctor may ask you to return to the clinic for more tests. **Most abnormal test results do NOT mean you have cancer.** You can call me if you are nervous or worried.

Abnormal cells that are found early can usually be treated to prevent cancer. Or we can find out if we have the virus that can cause cell changes. That's why it's so important that we get screened regularly.

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# Why Don't Some of Us Get Screened? (Part 1)

Reasons why we don't get screened:

"It is embarrassing.  
I don't want anyone  
to see me naked."

"I am afraid.  
I've heard it hurts."

"My partner doesn't  
want me to get  
screened."

# Talking Points for Slide 13

Talk about the different reasons why some women don't get screened. You can allow women to tell their own stories, and also share some of the examples shown below.

Can you think of reasons why some of us don't get screened?

**It is embarrassing. I don't want anyone to see me naked.**

It is normal to feel embarrassed when getting screened. It's a very common test that only takes a few minutes. It's worth it to find abnormal cells early or to find out if we have the virus that may cause cell changes. The doctors and nurses are professionals. They do these tests on women like us every day.

**I'm afraid of getting screened. I've heard it hurts.**

The tests are fast and simple. Some women feel a little pain. If a woman feels pain, it is not strong and is very brief. It's worth it to find abnormal cells early or to find out if we have the virus that may cause cell changes.

**My partner doesn't want me to get screened.**

It's hard to make decisions that your partner doesn't agree with. Getting screened is an important part of taking care of our health. Each of us has to make the final decision about getting screened.



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## Why Don't Some of Us Get Screened? (Part 2)

Other reasons why we don't get screened:

"I'm afraid that they'll find cancer. I'd rather not know."

"I don't have time to make an appointment, much less go to the appointment."

# Talking Points for Slide 14

**I'm afraid that they'll find cancer. I'd rather not know.**

Most women who get screened do not have cancer. If you know early there is a problem, you and your doctor can plan the treatment. Remember, when cervical cancer is found early, treatment works best.

**I don't have time to make an appointment, much less go to the appointment.**

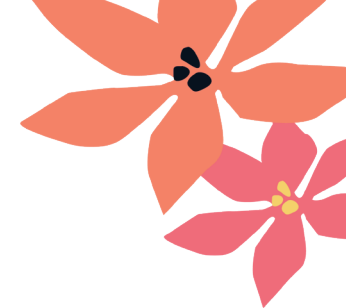
Making an appointment and getting screened only takes a few minutes. If we don't make time to take care of our health, we won't have time down the road to take care of our families.

Any other reasons why we don't get screened?



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## Why Don't Some of Us Get Screened? (Part 3)



Are there other reasons why some of us don't get screened?

"I don't have money to pay for screening."

"I don't have transportation to the clinic."

"I don't know anyone who can take care of the children."

# Talking Points for Slide 15

**I don't have money to pay for screening.**

Many programs help pay for screening. Here is a resource sheet for our area. This will help you find a clinic where affordable tests are available.

**I don't have transportation to the clinic.**

If you don't have a car or can't take a bus, you may want to ask someone to give you a ride to the doctor. How do you usually get to places you need to go? Some clinics also offer help with transportation. You can ask your clinic about this when you make your appointment.

**I don't know anyone who can take care of the children.**

Some clinics let you take your children with you. Check with your clinic.



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## Marisol's Story

"If I had waited longer, it would have been more serious. The Pap test saved my life!"

"After my Pap test, I got a letter from the doctor. The letter said that I needed to have more tests because my Pap test was abnormal. When I went back to the clinic, they took a small piece of tissue, called a biopsy. The biopsy was taken from the cervix and then sent to get analyzed. After that, the doctor told me that I had cervical cancer. Thank goodness, it had been found early!

"I went to the doctor two times for treatment and now I'm cured. The Pap test found the cancer in time. If I had waited longer, it would have been more serious.

"Now I have to have tests more often. I don't mind. The Pap test saved my life!"



# Talking Points for Slide 16

This is Marisol's story. She tells us about when she had cervical cancer.

"After my Pap test, I got a letter from the doctor. The letter said that I needed to have more tests because my Pap test was abnormal. When I went back to the clinic, they took a small piece of tissue, called a biopsy. The biopsy was taken from the cervix and then sent to get analyzed. After that, the doctor told me that I had cervical cancer. Thank goodness, it had been found early!

"I went to the doctor two times for treatment and now I'm cured. The Pap test found the cancer in time. If I had waited longer, it would have been more serious.

"Now I have to have tests more often. I don't mind. The Pap test saved my life!"

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## Beatriz's Story

"I'm happy that I got a Pap test! My doctor's office called. They said the test was normal and that I should return in 3 years. I plan to do that!"

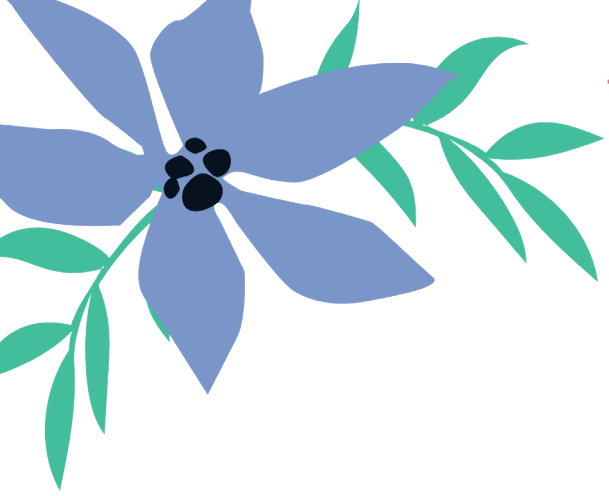
# Talking Points for Slide 17

This is Beatriz's story.

"I'm happy that I got a Pap test. My doctor's office called. They said the test was normal and that I should return in 3 years. I plan to do that!"

What do you think about Marisol and Beatriz's stories?

Before listening to Marisol's story, did you think that women could survive cervical cancer?



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## Final Words

Make a promise to yourself and your family.

Get screened. It can save your life!



# Talking Points for Slide 18

## Final Words

It is very important to take care of our health. We, as women, wives, mothers, grandmothers, daughters, and sisters have the responsibility to take care of ourselves, so we can be there for our families.

Make a promise to yourself and your family. Get screened. It can save your life!

Do you have any questions?

**Remember:** One screening is not enough. Regular screening can help prevent cervical cancer or find it early when it's easier to treat. Get a Pap test every 3 years. Or get an HPV test, or an HPV test and a Pap test together, every 5 years.

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# Thank You

For more information, contact CDC  
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)  
TTY: 1-888-232-6348 [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

