

DON'T FEAR THE SMEAR

KANIKSU COMMUNITY HEALTH

Did you know a Pap smear lasts just 5 minutes? But the impacts of cervical cancer can last a lifetime.

WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?

Cervical cancer starts in the cells lining the cervix -- the lower part of the uterus (womb). The cervix connects the body of the uterus (the upper part where a fetus grows) to the vagina (birth canal). Cancer starts when cells in the body begin to grow out of control.

SCREENING FOR CERVICAL CANCER - THE SMEAR

One of the most important healthcare screenings a woman should undergo every few years is a Papanicolaou (Pap) smear.

A Pap smear is a procedure that accurately tests for cervical cancer, which was one of the most common causes of cancer deaths in women until the Pap test was developed. Usually done in conjunction with a pelvic exam, a Pap smear involves collecting cells from the cervix, which is the lower, narrow end of the uterus at the top of the vagina and analyzing them for any abnormalities. Performed in your doctor's office, a Pap smear only takes a few minutes, yet detecting cervical cancer early – or cervical cells that suggest cancer might develop in the future – provides you with a greater chance of timely treatment.

In general, doctors recommend beginning Pap smear tests at age 21 and repeating it every three years for women ages 21 to 65. Women 30 years and over who combine a Pap smear with testing for human papillomavirus (HPV) – a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can cause cervical cancer – can consider Pap testing every five years.

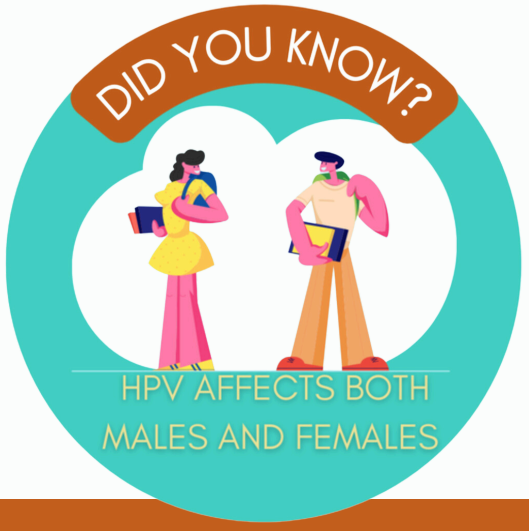
Although more frequent Pap testing may be recommended if you have certain risk factors, such as:

- A cervical cancer diagnosis or Pap smear that detected precancerous cells
- A weakened immune system
- An HPV infection
- Exposure to diethylstilbestrol (DES) before birth
- A history of smoking

WHAT IS HPV?

HPV, or human papillomavirus, is a common virus that can cause cancers later in life. HPV infections are very common. Nearly everyone will get HPV at some point in their lives.

- More than 42 million Americans are infected with types of HPV that cause disease.
- About 13 million Americans, including teens, become infected each year.
- HPV is spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact. You can get HPV by having sex with someone who has the virus, even if they don't have signs or symptoms.



Have questions?

Call 208.263.7101
kchnorthidaho.org

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'VE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH CERVICAL CANCER

Hearing "You have cancer" is shocking, terrifying, and confusing. You may feel anxious, overwhelmed, afraid, or angry, and your feelings may change by the moment.

No matter how you're feeling, know that your feelings are normal and you have a right to feel any emotion that comes up and manage it in the way that feels right for you.

To start coping with your emotions, you can try everything or nothing, including talking or journaling about your feelings, finding ways to relax like meditation, being as active as your body will allow, or leaning into hobbies and activities that bring you joy.

Remember – cancer is not your fault, you don't have to be upbeat or positive if you're not feeling that way, and it's 100% okay to set boundaries while you process your diagnosis.

Cancer treatment is very personalized depending on your diagnosis, overall health, doctor's recommendation, and your own opinion. All treatment decisions should be made with your doctor.

Common types of treatments for cervical cancer include:

- Surgery for Cervical Cancer
- Radiation Therapy for Cervical Cancer
- Chemotherapy for Cervical Cancer
- Targeted Drug Therapy for Cervical Cancer
- Immunotherapy for Cervical Cancer

Depending on the type and stage of your cancer, you may need more than one type of treatment. For the earliest stages of cervical cancer, either surgery or radiation combined with chemo may be used. For later stages, radiation combined with chemo is usually the main treatment. Chemo (by itself) is often used to treat advanced cervical cancer.

24%
40 to 60 years old reveal it has been more than 3 years since their last appointment with their OB-GYN or primary care provider.

50%
of women in the U.S. between the ages of 21 and 60 don't know how often they should be screened for cervical cancer.

1 in 4
Women avoid their Pap smears because of embarrassment or fear.

Bonners Ferry
6615 Comanche Street
Bonners Ferry, ID 83805
(208) 267-1718

Priest River
6509 Hwy. 2
Priest River, ID 83856
(208) 448-2321

Sandpoint
810 6th Ave.
Sandpoint, ID 83864
(208) 263-7101

Sandpoint Behavioral Health
1033 Baldy Mountain Road.
Sandpoint, ID 83864
(208) 920-5151