

RISK FACTORS FOR CERVICAL CANCER

The main risk factor for cervical cancer is having unprotected sex, which often leads to an HPV infection. This infection can also spread by sharing sex toys. Here are some factors that increase the risk of cervical cancer:

- **Age:** Most cases are diagnosed between 30 and 35 years old, but it can happen at any age.
- **Weak immune system:** Conditions like HIV or AIDS can raise the risk.
- **Childbearing:** Having many children or having your first child before 17 can increase risk.
- **Mother's medical history:** If your mother took a hormone called DES while pregnant with you, it raises the risk.
- **Previous cancer:** A history of cancers like vaginal, vulval, kidney, or bladder cancer can increase risk.
- **Smoking:** Smoking is a risk factor.



SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Cancer Research UK offers confidential support through cancer information nurses, who answer questions about all cancer aspects. **Contact them at 0808 800 4040 (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm) or visit cruk.org.**

Maggie's offers free practical, emotional, and social support for individuals with cancer and their families. Contact details:

- **Website:** maggies.org
- **Phone:** 0300 123 1801
- **Email:** enquiries@maggies.org

A Maggie's Centre is located at Northampton General Hospital, Billing Road, with no appointment needed for drop-in visits.

Macmillan Cancer Support offers practical, medical, and financial assistance while advocating for improved cancer care. **Contact them on 0808 808 0000 (available 7 days a week, 8am–8pm; hours may vary for specialists) or visit macmillan.org.uk**

CERVICAL CANCER

What to keep an eye on, risk factors, the ins and outs of cervical screening, and where to find a helping hand!



WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

- Vaginal bleeding that's unusual for you – including bleeding during or after sex, between your periods or after the menopause, or having heavier periods than usual
- Changes to your vaginal discharge
- Pain during sex
- Pain in your lower back, between your hip bones (pelvis), or in your lower tummy

If you or your partner notice anything from this list speak to a doctor.



CERVICAL SCREENING

Cervical screenings look for changes in the cells on the cervix. They are usually offered **every 5 years** to people with a cervix **aged 25 to 64**.

Here's what to expect during the screening:

1. Undress from the waist down behind a screen and use a provided sheet.
2. Lie back on the bed with legs bent, feet together, and knees apart; positions may change during the test.
3. A speculum will be gently inserted into your vagina, possibly with lubricant.
4. The speculum will be opened to view your cervix.
5. A soft brush will collect a small sample of cells from your cervix.
6. The speculum will be removed, and you can then get dressed.

TIPS FOR YOUR SCREENING

- Wear something you can leave on during the test, like a skirt or long jumper
- Bring someone with you for support
- Ask for a female nurse or doctor if you would prefer
- Ask the nurse or doctor to use a smaller speculum if you feel any discomfort
- Ask if you can put the speculum in yourself if you would prefer to
- Ask about lying in a different position – such as on your side with your knees pulled up to your chest
- Bring something to listen to or read during the test
- Do not feel pressured to keep going – you can ask to stop the test at any time
- Try not to be afraid or embarrassed to talk to the nurse or doctor – telling them how you feel will help them understand what kind of support you might need

