

The connection between HPV, Cervical Dysplasia and Cervical Cancer

The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is a sexually transmitted virus responsible for the majority of abnormal PAP smears. It's estimated that 75% of the sexually active population will be exposed to HPV in their lifetime.⁽¹⁾ HPV may lie dormant in the tissues for many years prior to causing problems and make determining when the virus was acquired difficult. HPV is a versatile wart virus with over 100 strains, 30 to 40 of which can be transmitted sexually. Some strains may cause warts, while others may produce changes invisible to the naked eye. Strains that don't produce warts are more likely to cause cervical changes. The development of abnormal cells on the cervix is called cervical dysplasia. Chronic HPV infection and cervical dysplasia raise the risk for cervical cancer. Usually, the development of cancer occurs slowly and is most often found in women who have neglected PAP smears over the years. However, strains 16 and 18 are aggressive, and have been known to cause cancer in as little as 18 months.

The good news is, that cervical dysplasia is 100% treatable in its noninvasive stages. Natural therapies and lifestyle modifications are very effective in reversing the condition, but advanced stages of dysplasia may require more aggressive treatment. A Naturopathic Doctor will have additional options and your gynecologist will have several outpatient surgical options available. All are effective and have differing degrees of invasiveness, possible side effects and/or possible complications.

Protecting Against HPV

The virus is transmitted via skin to skin contact. Condoms offer the best protection against sexual transmission, but it's not 100%. Female condoms may offer additional protection because they cover more skin. Condom use is essential for minimizing the risk of acquiring or transmitting HPV. Prior to taking a new lover, discuss prior sexual history, look for previous partners who've had abnormal PAP smears, irregular usage of condoms, multiple sex partners, history of genital warts or sores. Currently, there is no test to identify if an individual carries HPV; usually it is identified when it shows up on a PAP smear.

Getting Regular Pap Smears

Since the introduction of PAP smear testing, cervical cancer rates have dropped rapidly. Even still, cervical cancer ranked third in cancer related deaths among U.S. women in 2008, and was responsible for 280,000 deaths world wide.⁽¹⁾

Regular PAP smears offer early detection and enable the widest range of treatment options. Recent changes in guidelines have created confusion and disagreement regarding how often to have a PAP smear. Consider these commonsense guidelines: annual PAP smears with a history of abnormal PAPs or a new partner (for at least the first two to three years). If not sexually active or, if in a monogamous relationship with no history of abnormal PAPs, the current guidelines of once every 3 years seems appropriate, with the possible exceptions of women who smoke; have lovers who smoke; use hormone replacement therapy; birth control pills or other hormonal therapies.

Build your Team

When faced with challenges in cervical health, the most effective approach is multi-pronged. Diet and lifestyle changes along with supplementation can reverse cervical dysplasia in many cases, and help prevent its return. Enlist help for mild to moderate dysplasia with a knowledgeable holistic healthcare practitioner. For more severe cases, a Naturopathic physician can assist in removing unhealthy tissue through the use of topical escharotic treatments. Work with a physician to obtain an accurate diagnosis and monitor progress. Consider reserving invasive procedures should holistic modalities fail to produce desired results in a satisfactory amount of time.

A healthy cervix reflects a healthy body.

Resources:

- 1)Women's Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine by Dr. Tori Hudson, ND
- 2)Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine by Dr. Michael Murray, ND. & Dr. Joseph Pizzorno, ND.
- 3)University of Maryland Medical Center. Cervical Dysplasia. www.umm.edu/altmed/articles/cervical-dysplasia-000034.htm
- 4)Locating a Naturopathic Doctor in your area: www.naturopathic.org
- 5)My Experience with Naturopathic Treatment of Cervical Dysplasia (CIN III) <http://www.sisterzeus.com/dysplasia.html>
- 6)Getting a PAP smear: Planned Parenthood—Find one near you. <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

Cervical Dysplasia and HPV

Respond well to holistic therapies.



Natural Solutions for Promoting Cervical Health while Reducing the Risk of Cervical Cancer

The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is associated with the development of cervical dysplasia and an increased risk of cervical cancer.

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Natural Solutions for Cervical Health

Natural Care for Cervix Health

Surgical removal of cervical dysplasia does not guarantee a cure. The best insurance against cervical dysplasia is a nutrient-rich diet, appropriate nutritional supplementation, strong immune function, a healthy lifestyle and eliminating known risk factors. Immune function is extremely important in protecting against viral infection; clearing the virus after infection; preventing chronic infection; and removing unhealthy cells which could become cancerous.

Cervical dysplasia also responds quite well to holistic therapies which incorporate all the above and more. To heal the cervix naturally, work with an experienced holistic healthcare provider for best results.

Living a Healthy Lifestyle

Cervical health is a reflection of the individual's health. After being exposed to HPV, many women find that when lifestyle and diet are less than optimal, and stress levels are elevated that they are more likely to notice changes in cervical health. The virus makes the cervix cells more vulnerable to nutritional deficiencies and oxidative damage. Depressed immunity increases the risks.

- Eliminate soft drinks, alcohol, coffee and black tea; switch to green tea and experiment with fresh vegetable juicing.
- Engage in regular exercise; attain a healthy weight.
- Decrease stress levels; incorporate healthy coping techniques and stress relieving activities. Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Quit smoking. Smoking greatly increases risk of cervical dysplasia and cancer.
- Discontinue hormonal contraception.
- Take steps to reduce overall inflammation.

Let thy Food be thy Medicine

- Hydrate—consume one half of your body weight in ounces of pure water each day.
- Increase fiber intake, focus on whole foods.
- Eliminate sugar and refined foods. Limit exposure to hormones, antibiotics and chemicals. Reduce saturated fats and eliminate trans-fats.
- Replace simple carbs with whole grains, legumes, raw nuts and seeds, fruits and vegetables.
- Colorful fruits and vegetables will boost antioxidant levels. Consume more cruciferous vegetables, dark leafy greens, squash, blue berries and papaya. Diets rich in fruits and vegetables were associated with a 54% decreased risk of chronic HPV infection.⁽¹⁾
- Healthy fats, nut and seed oils, fish oil, omega-3's, and GLA to help decrease inflammation and promote health. Consider a modified vegetarian diet which includes fish. Reduce or eliminate animal products, especially commercial animal products.
- Consume foods with probiotics or supplement with microencapsulated probiotics to foster healthy GI bacterial balance and healthy immune function.

Important Nutrients

Decreased levels of the following nutrients have been independently associated with an increased risk of developing cervical dysplasia and/or cervical cancer. 67% of cervical cancer patients have nutritional deficiencies.⁽²⁾ Clearly, this is a concern.

- Carotenenes—including beta-carotene, zeaxanthin, lycopene and others. Carotenoids help stop the progression of abnormal cell growth and are associated with a decreased risk of chronic HPV infection. For best results, take in a mixture of carotenoids from dietary sources and food based supplements. Avoid use of synthetic beta-carotene (contradicted for smokers and those at risk for lung cancer). Unlike synthetic sources, food based sources are not associated with increased risk for certain types of cancers.

- Vitamins C & E—anti-oxidant and anti-cancer effects are well documented for both. Vitamin C also helps to strengthen epithelial cells, improve tissue repair and boost immune function.
- Folic Acid—Signs of deficiency appear in cervical tissue many weeks prior to detection in blood chemistry. Deficiency increases the risk of HPV infection upon exposure, and contributes to cellular mutations and an increased risk of cervical cancer. Birth control pills interfere with the cells ability to use folic acid.
- B Vitamins—researchers have discovered that low levels of B6 impair estrogen metabolism and decreases immune response. Several B vitamins have been found important for cervix health. Supplement with a high quality food based B Complex.
- Selenium—decreased levels are often found in those with cervical cancer. The anticarcinogenic effect is believed to come from boosting glutathione peroxidase activity.
- Indole-3-Carbinol—a phytochemical found in cruciferous vegetables. Protective against abnormal cell growth. Supportive of healthy estrogen metabolism thus protecting against harmful estrogens and metabolites. Inhibits tumor progression.

Herbs for Immune Support

Green tea—Protects against cancer by encouraging abnormal cervix cells to self destruct via apoptosis; inhibits HPV activity; and boosts immune function.

Curcumin—inhibits lipid peroxidation; down-regulates HPV oncogenes; cytotoxic effects on HPV infected cells while protecting normal cells.

Shaklee Nutriferon has been shown to boost natural interferon which protects cells from viral invasion and boosts immune cell production.