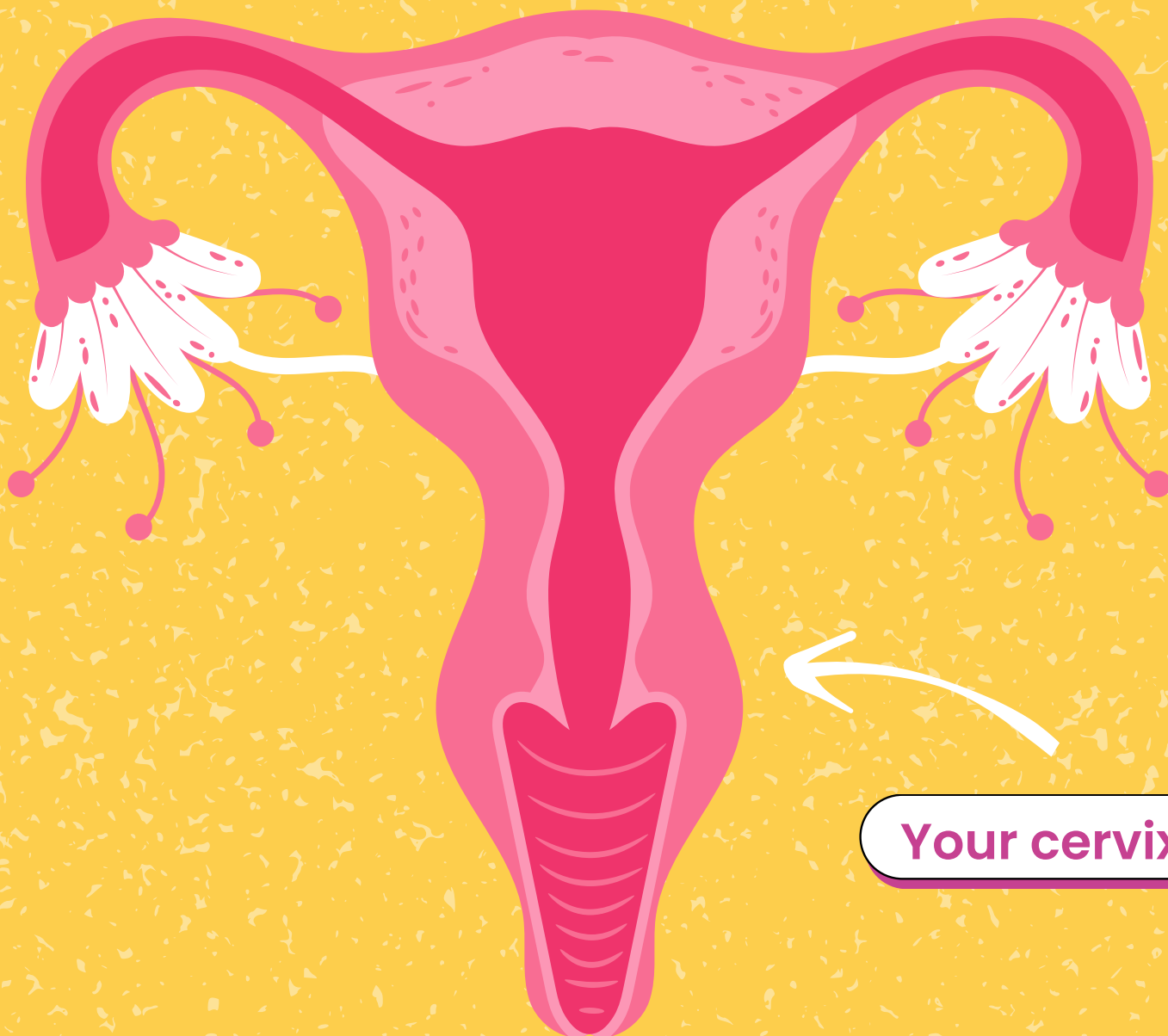


Understanding Cervical Cancer

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

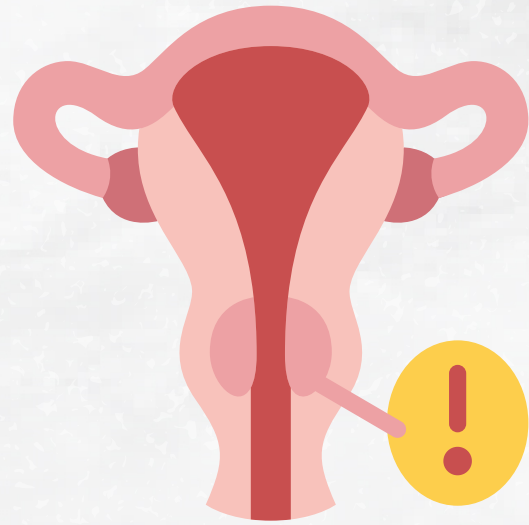


Your cervix

WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that occurs in the cells of the cervix, the lower part of the uterus.

It is primarily caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), a sexually transmitted infection. Over time, persistent HPV infections can lead to abnormal cell changes in the cervix, eventually progressing into cervical cancer.



SYMPTOMS OF CERVICAL CANCER

Cervical cancer often remains asymptomatic in its early stages. However, as it advances, the following symptoms may become noticeable

1. ABNORMAL VAGINAL BLEEDING:

Unusual bleeding between periods, after intercourse, or after menopause can be an early sign of cervical cancer.

3. VAGINAL DISCHARGE:

Unusual vaginal discharge that is watery, bloody, or foul-smelling may be a warning sign.

2. MEDICAL SYMPTOMS:

Discomfort or pain during intercourse and persistent, unexplained pelvic pain may serve as significant indicators of cervical cancer, particularly if the disease has progressed to affect nearby tissues.

4. FATIGUE AND WEIGHT LOSS:

As with many cancers, unexplained fatigue and unexplained weight loss can be symptoms of advanced cervical cancer.

PRECAUTIONS AND PREVENTION

VACCINATION

The HPV vaccine, recommended for ages 11–26, is highly effective against common cancer-causing HPV strains.

Administered in multiple doses, it reduces the risk of HPV-related cancers and infections, safeguarding individual and public health.

Regular healthcare discussions aid informed vaccination decisions.

Early vaccination is encouraged to ensure optimal protection, as it is most effective when administered before any potential exposure to the virus through sexual activity

REGULAR SCREENINGS

Women should undergo routine Pap smears and HPV testing as advised by their healthcare provider.

Early detection greatly improves treatment outcomes. Pap smears, or Pap tests are crucial cervical cancer screening tools for women.

During this routine procedure, cells from the cervix are collected and examined for abnormalities, allowing early detection and prevention of cervical cancer.

Regular screenings are vital for early detection, ensuring proactive intervention and safeguarding overall reproductive health.

SAFE SEX PRACTICES:

Reducing your risk of HPV by practicing safe sex can help prevent cervical cancer.

Using condoms and limiting the number of sexual partners can be effective in this regard.

DON'T SMOKE:

Smoking increases the risk of cervical cancer. Quitting smoking can significantly lower your risk.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

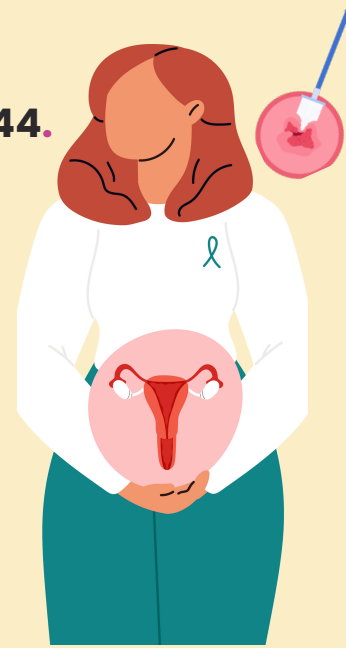
Maintaining a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and managing your weight can contribute to overall well-being and potentially reduce your cancer risk.

WHAT AGE GROUPS AT RISK?

Cervical cancer most commonly affects women between the ages of 35 and 44.

However, it can occur in women of all age groups.

Routine screening, such as Pap smears, is essential for early detection and prevention.



WHAT TO DO IF DIAGNOSED?

If you receive a cervical cancer diagnosis, it's essential to take the following steps:

CONSULT A SPECIALIST

Seek consultation from a gynecologic oncologist or a cancer treatment center. They can provide a comprehensive evaluation and develop a personalized treatment plan.

TREATMENT OPTIONS:

Treatment may include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or a combination of these. The specific approach will depend on the stage and type of cervical cancer.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

A cancer diagnosis can be emotionally challenging. Seek support from friends, family, or a therapist to help cope with the emotional aspects of your journey.

FOLLOW-UP CARE

Regularly attend follow-up appointments to monitor your progress and address any potential complications.



Cervical cancer is a highly treatable and, in many cases, preventable disease with early detection and vaccination.

By understanding its symptoms, taking precautions, and following appropriate medical advice, individuals can enhance their chances of overcoming this disease and living a healthy life.





Pratisandhi Foundation is a youth-led nonprofit organisation working towards making sexuality education accessible across India.

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