

## HOW DO YOU GET CERVICAL CANCER?

This is not fully understood, but the occurrence of Cervical cancer is highly co-related with HPV (Human Papilloma Virus). HPV is a large family of viruses that affects the genital area and is transmitted sexually through bodily contact.

Most of us (men and women) have had a HPV infection at some time but would be unaware of it, as it usually clears up on its own. HPV can also be dormant in many people and they may never develop and infection from it, or the infection may flare up years after the exposure.

When the infection in females is chronic it causes changes in the cellular growth in the cervix and can lead to the development of cancerous cells which then spread throughout the cervix and even on into the rest of the reproductive system and surrounding organs.

## What are the triggers?

Some activities can exacerbate your risk of severe HPV infection, such as:

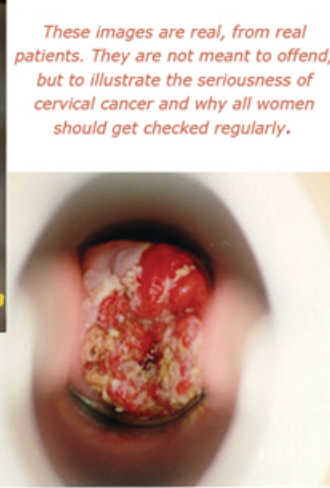
- sexual activity at a very young age
- having multiple children
- multiple sexual partners
- unprotected sex

and of course you are particularly vulnerable if you have a compromised immune system, such as infection with HIV.

So as you can see, most women are at risk, It is important to get checked regularly.



A healthy cervix



A severely cancerous cervix

These images are real, from real patients. They are not meant to offend, but to illustrate the seriousness of cervical cancer and why all women should get checked regularly.

## WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?

Cancer is always named after the part of the body it affects, so cervical cancer is cancerous cell growth in the cervix.

The Cervix is the entrance to the uterus. Only women have a uterus, so only women can get cervical cancer.

## What are the symptoms?

This is one of the major problems with cervical cancer, there are no symptoms.

After some time there may be small amounts of pain or cramping, some vaginal discharge, bleeding in between periods and other minor signs. But overall there are little clues to cervical cancer until it can be too late.

**\*\*THAT IS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO GET REGULAR SCREENING\*\***



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## CERVICAL CANCER

What you need to know

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Cervical cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in women worldwide with half a million new cases globally every year. There is a concentrated global effort to increase awareness of cervical cancer, to promote early and regular testing and to provide treatment quickly before the cancer can take hold.

**Cervical Cancer is 100% treatable** and most often without recurrence. The cancer usually develops through the cervical tissue quite slowly, so with regular testing it can be picked up before it becomes serious.

**But in Tanzania nearly 70% of women screening positive for cervical cancer will DIE FROM IT.**

This is because women are unaware or reluctant to be screened. They are most often diagnosed too late when the cancer is in advanced stages and symptoms have developed that are mostly irreversible.

## GET SCREENED REGULARLY



## WHAT IS CECAP?

Cervical Cancer Prevention Program, is a global initiative begun by a combination of NGO's and adopted by many governments, including that of Tanzania.

SANITAS has adopted similar policies and procedures to that of this program to give our patients the same benefits. We seek to educate all of our female patients on the simple nature of the screening and the treatment, and the wisdom of regular screening.



Positive diagnosis for cancerous cell activity

## WHAT ARE THE SCREENING TEST OPTIONS?

### PAP SMEAR

A pap smear is where your nurse or Gynaecologist will take a smear of cells from your cervix. The sample is then examined by the pathologist under a microscope and any abnormal cell appearances will be noted.

If there is no abnormal cells you will be given a clear result. If there are abnormal cells you may be advised to take a second test. Test results for Pap smear usually take 3-5 days.

### VIA SCREENING

The WHO (World Health Organisation) has developed and recommends this method of diagnosis and treatment for cervical cancer known as 'VIA', which means 'visual inspection with acetic acid'.

VIA is very similar method to the Pap Smear, but there is no delay in the result, it only relies on the eye and experience of the medical staff conducting the inspection. The agent is applied (acetic acid) directly to the cervix and can provide instant results. The acetic acid causes a whitening of any pre-cancerous or cancerous cells and the officer can tell you instantly if there is any cancer activity present.