

CERVICAL CANCER

Queensland^{1,2}

- ✦ 191 Queensland women were diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2016 and 60 women died from the disease.
- ✦ On average, women diagnosed with a cervical cancer were 74 percent as likely to live for another five years compared to the general population.

Trends in Queensland²

- ✦ Between 2008 and 2016, cervical cancer incidence rates were stable. This followed a 3.5 per cent per year decrease in incidence rates from 1982 to 2007.
- ✦ Mortality rates due to cervical cancer increased between 2011 to 2016 by 3.8% per year. This followed a decrease of 3.3 per cent per year between 1982 and 2010.

Australia³

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable of all gynaecological cancers, through Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and cervical screening.

- ✦ In 2015, 857 women were diagnosed with cervical cancer across Australia.
- ✦ There were 259 Australian women that died from cervical cancer in 2016.

Detection and symptoms⁴

In the early stages, cervical cancer usually has no symptoms. The only way to know if there are abnormal cells in the cervix, which may develop into cervical cancer, is to have a cervical screening test. The common signs may include:

- ✦ Vaginal bleeding between periods
- ✦ Menstrual bleeding that is longer or heavier than usual
- ✦ Bleeding after intercourse
- ✦ Pain during intercourse
- ✦ Unusual vaginal discharge
- ✦ Vaginal bleeding after menopause

¹ Queensland Cancer Register, 2019. Unpublished data (1982-2016).

² Queensland Cancer Statistics On-Line, 2019. Viertel Cancer Research Centre, Cancer Council Queensland (qcsol.cancerqld.org.au). Based on data released by the Queensland Cancer Register (1982-2016; released July 2019).

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2018 Cancer Data in Australia; Australian Cancer Incidence and Mortality (ACIM) books: breast cancer Canberra: AIHW Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2018 Cancer Data in Australia; Australian Cancer Incidence and Mortality (ACIM) books: cervical cancer Canberra: AIHW (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/cancer/cancer-data-in-australia/acim-books>)

⁴ Cervical cancer, Cancer Council (<https://www.cancer.org.au/about-cancer/types-of-cancer/cervical-cancer.html>)

Risk Factors⁴

Most cases of cervical cancer are caused by an infection called human papillomavirus (HPV). There are also other known risk factors:

- ✦ [Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\)](#) is a common virus – four out of five people will experience it at some stage of their lives. There are many different types of HPV, which affect both males and females. In most people the infection is harmless and clears up naturally in about one to two years. Occasionally, some types of HPV persist in the body and, if left untreated, can become cancerous.
- ✦ Smoking and passive smoking – chemicals in tobacco can damage the cells of the cervix, making cancer more likely to develop in women with HPV.
- ✦ Having a weakened immune system – the immune system helps rid the body of HPV. Women with a weakened immune system are at increased risk of developing cervical cancer. This includes women with the human deficiency virus (HIV) and women who take medicines that lower their immunity. Ask your doctor if this applies to you.
- ✦ Long-term use of oral contraceptive (the pill) – research has shown that women who have taken the pill for five years or more are at increased risk of developing cervical cancer. However, the risk is small and the pill can also help protect against other types of cancer, such as uterine and ovarian cancers.
- ✦ Exposure to Diethylstilboestrol (DES) – this is a synthetic form of the female hormone oestrogen. DES was prescribed to pregnant women from the 1940's to the early 1970's to prevent miscarriage. Studies have shown that the daughters of women who took DES have a small but increased risk of developing a rare type of cervical adenocarcinoma.

National Cervical Screening Program

- ✦ The Australian Government's National Cervical Screening Program has changed to improve early detection and save more lives. From December 1, 2017 all women or anyone with a cervix aged between 25 and 74 years are invited to have a Cervical Screening Test every five years.
- ✦ Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers. The new Cervical Screening Test is expected to reduce cervical cancer rates and deaths by at least 20 per cent.
- ✦ The test is a simple procedure to check the health of the cervix. It looks and feels the same as the Pap test, but tests for the Human Papillomavirus (known as HPV).
- ✦ For those who have been vaccinated against HPV, it is essential to still participate in regular cervical screening. The combination of the HPV vaccine and regular cervical screening is the best protection against cervical cancer. From January 1, 2018, Gardasil 9 replaced Gardasil 4 in the National Immunisation Program. Gardasil 9 protects against nine HPV types which cause around 90 per cent of cervical cancer in women, 95 per cent of all HPV related cancer in men and 90 per cent of genital warts.⁵

⁴ Understanding cervical cancer. Cancer Council (<https://www.cancercouncil.org.au/downloads/resources/booklets/Understanding-Cervical-Cancer.pdf>)

⁵ The HPV vaccine. Cancer Council Australia (<http://www.hpvvaccine.org.au/about-the-vaccine/vaccine-background.aspx>)

- ✦ Anyone with symptoms such as unusual bleeding, discharge or pain should see their health care professional immediately.
- ✦ For more information, visit cancer.org.au

Prevention

The HPV vaccine, Gardasil 9, has been developed to protect against nine HPV types which cause around 90 per cent of cervical cancers in women (and the majority of other HPV-related cancers in women), 95 per cent of all HPV-related cancers in men and 90 per cent of genital warts.

The vaccine has been proven safe for use. Girls and boys aged 12–13 years can receive the HPV vaccine free of charge as part of the National HPV Vaccination Program. The vaccine is administered two times and the injections should be given at least six months apart. Read more [here](#). In addition, Cancer Council Queensland recommends that to reduce your overall cancer risk you; quit smoking, maintain a healthy body weight, eat a healthy diet, be physically activity, stay SunSmart, limit alcohol, participate in cancer screening programs (if eligible) and report unusual changes to your doctor immediately.

Information and Support

Cancer Council 13 11 20

Being diagnosed with cancer or supporting a loved one can leave you with many questions. We want to help you find the answers. Call Cancer Council 13 11 20 Information and Support line to talk with one of the team.

Our team can provide you with cancer information, emotional and practical support. We can also refer you to Cancer Council Queensland's support programs and services.

This confidential service is available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm (excluding public holidays).

Cancer Connect

Cancer Connect is a confidential telephone-based peer support service that connects you, your carer or loved ones with a peer support volunteer who has had a similar cancer experience. You can be matched with a Cancer Connect volunteer based on cancer diagnosis, treatment, family or work issues.

Cancer Counselling Service

Living with a cancer diagnosis, or supporting someone along the way, is rarely easy. Talking things through with a counsellor or psychologist can help you manage your cancer related concerns.

Our Cancer Counselling Service is available for anyone distressed by cancer at any stage. We are a telephone-based counselling service, with face to face appointments available in some regional offices. Our team included nurse counsellors and psychologists trained and experienced in helping people affected by cancer.

For further information and support, please call Cancer Council 13 11 20

Disclaimer: The information in this publication should not be used as a substitute for advice from a properly qualified medical professional who can advise you about your own individual medical needs. It is not intended to constitute medical advice and is provided for general information purposes only. Information on cancer, including the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer, is constantly being updated and revised by medical professionals and the research community.

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