

# Track Time

You have spent a good portion of your life needing to **Track Time** around your gynecological health. From menstruation through ovulation and pregnancy, understanding your body and what it is going through has been a priority. All women are at risk for gynecologic cancers, and risk increases with age. Don't lose track of time.



**Stay proactive in communicating with your healthcare provider about your gynecological health. Treatment is most effective when gynecologic cancers are found early.**

## WHAT IS GYNECOLOGIC CANCER?

Gynecologic cancer is any cancer that starts in a woman's reproductive organs. Cancer is always named for the part of the body where it starts. Gynecologic cancers begin in different places within a woman's pelvis, the area below the stomach and in between the hip bones.

### Types of Gynecologic Cancer

- Cervical cancer begins in the cervix, which is the lower, narrow end of the uterus. (The uterus is also called the womb.)
- Ovarian cancer begins in the ovaries, which are located on each side of the uterus. Some ovarian cancers can also begin in the fallopian tubes or peritoneum.

- Uterine cancer begins in the uterus, the pear-shaped organ in a woman's pelvis where the baby grows when she is pregnant.
- Vaginal cancer begins in the vagina, which is the hollow, tube-like channel between the bottom of the uterus and the outside of the body.
- Vulvar cancer begins in the vulva, the outer part of the female genital organs.

Each gynecologic cancer is unique, with different signs and symptoms, different risk factors (things that may increase your chance of getting a disease), and different prevention strategies.


### Common Symptoms of Gynecologic Cancers


- Abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge is common on all gynecologic cancers except vulvar cancer.
- Feeling full too quickly or difficulty eating, bloating, and having abdominal or back pain are common for ovarian cancer.
- Pelvic pain or pressure is common for ovarian and uterine cancers.
- More frequent or urgent need to urinate and/or constipation are common for ovarian and vaginal cancers.
- Itching, burning, pain, or tenderness of the vulva, and changes in vulva color or skin, such as a rash, sores, or warts, are found only in vulvar cancer.




## HPV VACCINE

Cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), a very common sexually transmitted infection. The HPV vaccine protects against the types of HPV that most often cause cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers.

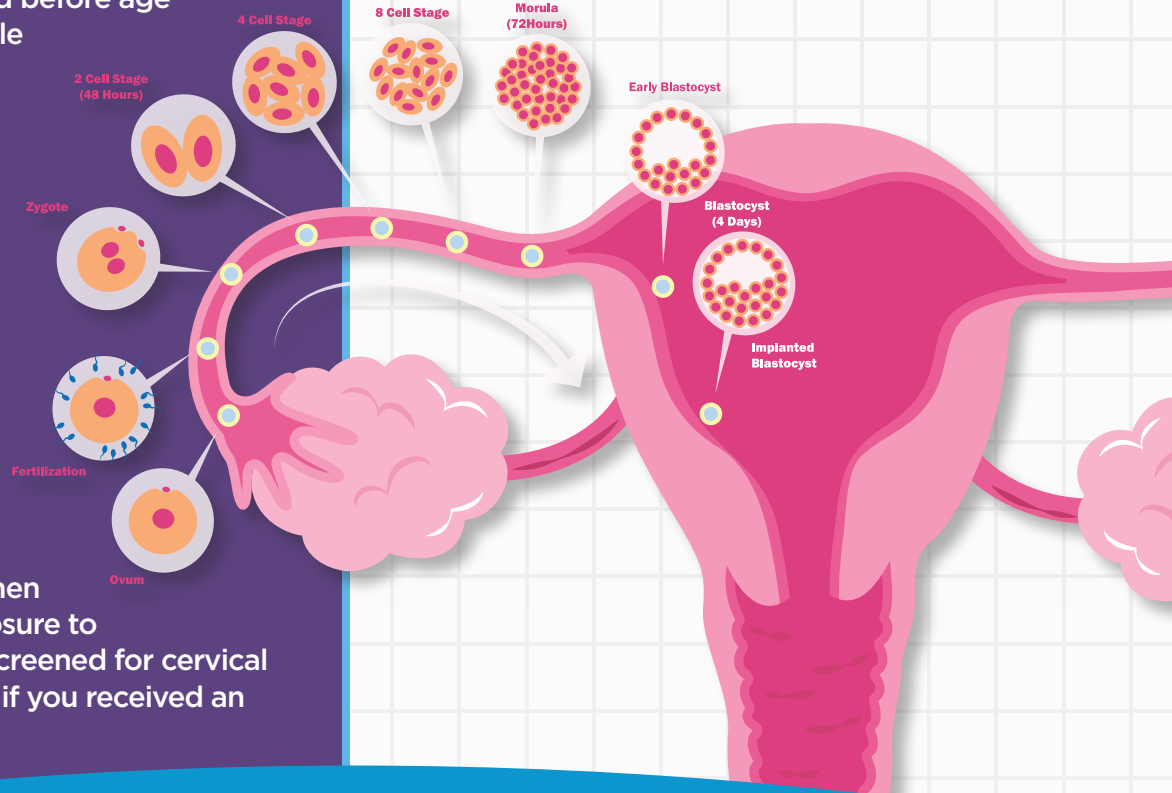
 HPV vaccination is recommended for preteens aged 11 to 12 years, but can be given starting at age 9.

 HPV vaccine also is recommended for everyone through age 26 years, if they are not vaccinated already.

 HPV vaccination is not recommended for everyone older than age 26 years. However, some adults age 27 through 45 years who are not already vaccinated may decide to get the HPV vaccine after speaking with their doctor about their risk for new HPV infections and the possible benefits of vaccination. HPV vaccination in this age range provides less benefit, as more people have already been exposed to HPV.

If vaccination is started before age 15, a two-dose schedule is recommended, with the doses given 6 to 12 months apart. For people who start the series after their 15th birthday, the vaccine is given in a series of three shots.

HPV vaccination prevents new HPV infections but does not treat existing infections or diseases. This is why the HPV vaccine works best when given before any exposure to HPV. You should get screened for cervical cancer regularly, even if you received an HPV vaccine.



## What screening tests are available?

Of all the gynecologic cancers, only cervical cancer has screening tests that can find this cancer early, when treatment works best. The Pap test also helps prevent cervical cancer by finding precancers, cell changes on the cervix that might become cervical cancer if they are not treated appropriately. A test called the HPV test looks for HPV infection. It can be used for screening women aged 30 years and older.

## Talk with your doctor if you believe you are at increased risk.

Learn your family's health history of breast or ovarian cancer, your doctor may recommend genetic counseling and testing. It is useful for a small percentage of women who have a family history of these cancers. It is not recommended for all women, but it is important for all women to know and tell their doctors about their family history. Talk with your doctor if you believe that you are at increased risk for gynecologic cancer. Ask what you might do to lower your risk and whether there are tests that you should have.