

CERVICAL CANCER INFORMATION



Marie Keating

FOUNDATION

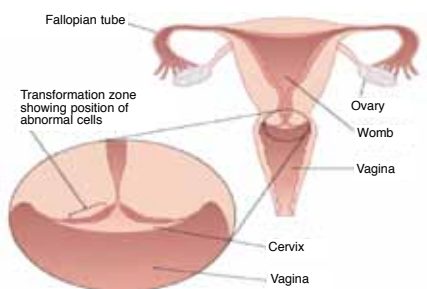
making cancer less frightening by enlightening

THE SIMPLE FACTS ABOUT CERVICAL CANCER

What is the cervix?

A woman's reproductive system is made up of the

- Vagina
- Uterus
- Ovaries



The cervix is the opening to the uterus from the vagina. Normally the cervix is tightly shut, with only a small opening to allow menstrual flow during a woman's period and to enable sperm to pass for the purpose of reproduction. During labour the cervix dilates widely to allow delivery of the baby.

What are the risk factors?

We don't know what causes cervical cancer to develop in some women and not in others but there are some well know risk factors

- Persistent HPV infection. There is a link between cervical cancer and a certain type of virus called the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). The viruses from the HPV family can cause genetic changes in the cells covering the cervix that make them more likely to become cancerous in time.
- Smoking, if you smoke, you are more likely to develop cervical cancer as smoking is known to weaken the immune system, this is turn can mean that pre-cancerous cells may become cancerous and develop into a cervical cancer.
- Sexual intercourse at an early age before the cervix is fully developed (under eighteen years).

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The more sexual partners a woman has had or her partner has had, the greater the risk of contracting HPV. Using a condom or diaphragm during sexual intercourse offers some protection from the virus but does not prevent it. This is because the skin around the genital area can also carry the virus.

How common is cervical cancer?

There is an average of 200 women diagnosed here in Ireland with cervical cancer every year. It is the second most common female cancer in Europe.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom of cervical cancer is bleeding from the vagina at times other than when you are having a period. You may experience bleeding

- Between periods
- After or during sex
- At any time past the menopause

Some women may also experience

- A vaginal discharge that smells unpleasant
- Discomfort or pain during sex

It is important to note that there are many other conditions associated with pain related to sex (most of these much more common than cervical cancer) but if you experience any of the above symptoms, you are advised to see your doctor. You probably don't have cancer but early detection provides the best possible chance of a cure.

How is cervical cancer diagnosed?

A cervical smear test can detect pre-cancerous changes in the cervix which is completely curable. If left untreated these cells may progress to cervical cancer.

Pre-cancerous cell changes do not usually have any symptoms, which is why it is so important to have regular smear tests.

National cervical screening programme

CervicalCheck is a government funded service that provides free cervical screening (smear tests) to women aged 25-60. CervicalCheck became available nationwide in September 2008. A successful national screening programme in Ireland has the potential to cut current incidence rates from cervical cancer by up to 80%.

CervicalCheck provides free smear tests every three years to women aged 25-44 and every five years to women aged 45-60, once they have had two “no abnormality detected” smear test results at three yearly intervals.

To avail of a free smear test, women can arrange an appointment with a smearer (doctor or practice nurse) of choice who is registered with CervicalCheck. GP's, Family planning and Well Woman Clinics all over Ireland are registered to take smear tests.

Vaccination programme

The HPV vaccination programme to protect girls from cervical cancer began in second level schools in May 2010. It protects against the types of HPV that cause 7 out of 10 of all cervical cancers, so it is still important for girls to have regular smear tests when they are adults.

Three doses of the vaccine over 6 to 12 months are needed to give full protection.

What is a cervical smear test?

The smear test is a very short procedure taking less than five minutes and is carried out by a doctor or nurse. It can be slightly uncomfortable but not painful. A small sample of cells are brushed from the surface of the cervix and sent to the laboratory for examination.

Who should have a smear test?

Every woman aged between 25 and 60 should have a regular smear test. If you have had a hysterectomy (womb removed), check with your doctor to see if you need to continue having smear tests. Remember that most women with an abnormal smear test do not have cancer of the cervix. The earlier a change is found the easier it is to treat.

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Treatment for cervical cancer

When pre-cancerous cells are diagnosed a number of procedures can be carried out in a hospital to treat these cells. This procedure is usually done on an outpatient basis.

Cancer of the cervix can be treated with either surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy or a combination of these treatments depending on the type, stage and grade of cancer. A treatment plan will also take into account your age and general health. Your doctor will discuss a treatment plan with you and answer any questions that you might have, you can also talk to the nurse at the hospital where you are being treated.

Who we are

Following their mother Marie's death in 1998 Ronan Keating and each member of the Keating family promised that they would do everything they could to bring an end to cancer. They committed to provide men and women with the necessary information to prevent cancer or detect it at its earliest stages. Their collective aim was "**making cancer less frightening by enlightening**". The Marie Keating Foundation is the realisation of a family's dedication – it is a promise to themselves in action.

Through its community information service our Foundation's dedicated nurses have enlightened thousands of people of the causes and the risk factors of male and female cancers. The Foundation is continuing to expand its awareness campaigns on each of the key cancers, at a local level through its community outreach approach as well as through national campaigns.

The Foundation finances other areas of need in cancer care. Monies raised to help to refurbish hospital oncology waiting rooms in making them more comfortable for patients. A limited comfort fund for those in financial difficulty as a result of their illness provides immediate assistance when required.

The Foundation is committed to raising awareness among young people in schools of cancer and its prevention and to this end, has successfully developed a Cancer Awareness Programme for schools which is being delivered to second level senior cycle students.

During its time in operation, the Marie Keating Foundation has become well established and faces a wealth of opportunities and claims on its services and resources.

On February 2nd 1998, our mother Marie died from breast cancer. At the time and all through her illness, we could do nothing to help our Mother who had, all our lives, done everything for us.

We, the Keating family have set up this charity in her name to try to help and prevent others going through what Mam went through and what we are still going through to this day. This is also to show that such a wonderful mother and person did not die in vain.

Take care.

The Keating Family



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