



Cervical Cancer Awareness member education

What is cervical cancer?

The cervix is the lower part of the uterus. The uterus is the place where a baby grows during pregnancy. Cancer occurs when cervical cells become abnormal and, over time, grow out of control. The cancer cells invade deeper into the cervical tissue. In advanced cases, cancer cells can spread to other organs of the body. More than 12,000 women get cervical cancer every year. Up to 93% of cervical cancers are preventable.

What is cervical cancer screening?

A *screening test* is used to look for a disease when a person does not have any noticeable symptoms. (When a person has symptoms, *diagnostic tests* are used to find out the cause of the symptoms.) Cervical cancer screening is looking for cancer before you have any symptoms. Cancer found early may be easier to treat. The Papanicolaou (Pap) Test screens for abnormal cells that may develop into cancer, and the HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) test screens for the HPV virus that causes most of these cell changes.

When does screening start and how often do women need to be screened for cervical cancer?

Alliant Health Plans follows the recommended guidelines of the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) for cervical cancer screening.

The USPSTF recommends screening for cervical cancer in women ages 21 to 65 years with cytology (Pap Smear) every 3 years or, for women ages 30 to 65 years who want to lengthen the screening interval, screening with a combination of cytology and human papillomavirus (HPV) testing should be performed every five years. If you are 21 to 65 years old, it is important for you to continue getting a Pap Test as directed by your doctor—even if you think you are too old to have a child or are no longer sexually active. If you are older than 65 and have had normal results for several years, or if you have had your cervix removed as part of a hysterectomy for non-cancerous conditions, like fibroids, your doctor may tell you that you do not need to have a cervical screening test anymore.

If you do not have a regular doctor, please search the Alliant Health Plans website at www.alliantplans.com and click on the “Find a Provider” link located on the Alliant Health Plans home page to begin your search.

This message is for informational purposes only, is not medical advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for proper medical care provided by a physician.