

DYSPLASIA (ABNORMAL CERVICAL CELLS)

FACTS

- Cervical cell changes are a precursor to cervical cancer and are caused by a virus of the HPV family (Human Papilloma Virus)
- Cell changes occur frequently **but only very rarely** develop into cervical cancer.
- There are no symptoms from cell changes
- The test for cell changes consists of using a small brush to take a tiny cell sample from the cervix
- Women aged 23 to 65 years are regularly invited for screening for cell changes

Cervical cell changes are not the same as cervical cancer!

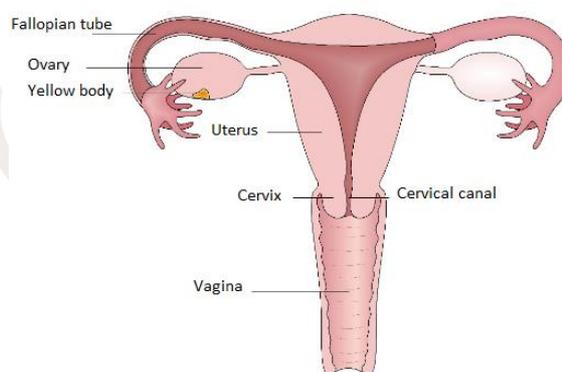
Dysplasia (cell changes) mean that the normal cervical cells start changing and look different. In most cases the cells will return to normal again, but in some rare cases the changes get worse and develop into cervical cancer. That is why it is recommended that women between 23 and 65 years old are regularly screened so that any cell changes can be identified and treated in a timely manner.

WHY DO CELLS CHANGE?

Cervical cell changes are caused by an infection by a virus, Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). HPV is an entire family of virus- more than 100 different types virus – but only about 12 of these cause cervical cell changes. The virus is transmitted during sexual intercourse and over 80% of Danish women will at some point in their life be infected with one or more of these viruses. The infection is symptomless and typically disappears after 8 to 18 months, but in a few cases it will remain in the mucous membranes and can lead to cell changes.

Cell changes do not appear if you have not been infected by the virus. That is why young women

are now offered a vaccination against the most dangerous forms of HPV virus. That way, the number of infected women and therefore also the number of cases of cell changes and ultimately the number of cases of cervical cancer can be reduced.



WHAT ARE CELL CHANGES?

Cell changes are precursors to cancer. We don't know whether in a given patient these early stages will in fact develop into cancer and we don't know either precisely how long it will take, but is so slow that it is sufficient to screen otherwise healthy women once every three years. We estimate that approximately 15% of cases of cell changes will develop into cervical cancer – if the cell changes are not removed before!

HPV AND CELL CHANGES

We know that in reality everybody is exposed to HPV, but we don't know why some people develop cell changes and others don't. Persistent HPV infection is a prerequisite for cervical cell changes (dysplasia) and for cervical cancer.

REGULAR SCREENING FOR CELL CHANGES

Women aged 23 to 49 are offered a test of cervical cells every 3 years and women aged 50 to 64 every 5 years.

There is no reason to do more frequent screenings, even if there is a family history of cervical cancer as the illness is not hereditary. The test is called a PAP test or smear test. The test is usually done at your GP's surgery. If the test shows abnormal cells, you will be referred to a gynaecologist for a tissue sample from the cervix.

- HPV Infection with a high-risk virus type

- Chronic HPV infection with a high-risk virus type
- Progressive cell changes (dysplasia)
- Cervical cancer

It is the HPV types 16, 18, 31, 33, 35, 39, 45, 51, 52, 56, 58, 59, 66 and 68 (high-risk HPV types), that cause serious cell changes and cancer. A small minority (3 -7%) of women aged 30 to 50 are infected with these high-risk types of HPV regardless of their level of sexual activity. Women who have both a chronic infection with a high-risk type of HPV and serious cell changes are at particular risk of developing cervical cancer.

Risk of developing cervical cancer	
All women	1:5.000 (0.02 %)
HPV-positive	1:1.000 (0.1 %)
Slight cell changes (CIN 1)	1:100 (1 %)
Moderate cell changes (CIN 2)	1:20 (5 %)
Serious and very serious cell changes (CIN 3)	1:7 (14 %)

PAP / SMEAR TESTS & CERVICAL CYTOLOGY

Cervical cancer exist in all age groups. To prevent cervical cancer, women aged 23 to 49 are offered a PAP test once every 3 years and women aged 50 to 65 once every 5 years.

The PAP test flags up a risk only: it identifies those women who are more at risk and therefore

need a further investigation of cell changes. The procedure is in accordance with the guidelines from The Danish Society for Obstetrics & Gynecology (DSOG; www.dsog.dk).

At a smear test, loose cells are gathered from the cervix with a little brush. It takes less than 30 seconds and is painless.

WHO CAN I CALL WITH QUESTIONS?

You are welcome to call the Women's Clinic every weekday from 8.00 - 15.00 on 36 46 71 40.

Revised April 2020. To be revised on an ongoing basis and certainly no later than 1 April 2022, before in case of any significant changes.

