

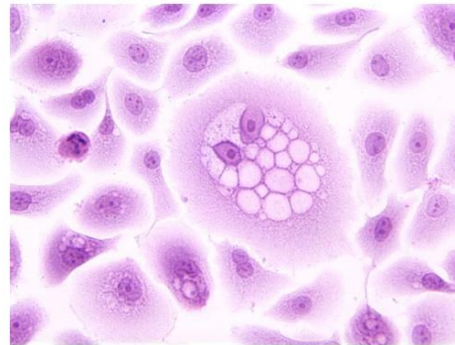
HPV and Cancer

How Does HPV Cause Cancer?

Once high-risk HPV infects cells, it interferes with the ways in which these cells communicate with one another, causing infected cells to multiply in an uncontrolled manner. These infected cells are usually recognized and controlled by the immune system. However, sometimes the infected cells remain and continue to grow, eventually forming an area of precancerous cells that, if not treated, can become cancer. Research has found that it can take 10 to 20 years, or even longer, for HPV-infected cervical cells to develop into a cancerous tumor.

Among women whose cervical cells are infected with high-risk HPV, several factors increase the chance that the infection will be long lasting and lead to precancerous cervical cells. These include:

- Having a very aggressive HPV type, particularly HPV 16 or HPV 18. If you have either of these HPV types, make sure you receive diagnostic testing with a colposcopy.
- Smoking cigarettes. [Quitting smoking](#) can help your body to fight HPV.
- Having a weakened immune system. If you have HIV or are taking medicines that suppress your immune system, talk to your health care provider about diagnostic testing and follow-up.



HPV infection causes cells to undergo changes. If not treated these cells can, over time, become cancer cells.

Credit: National Cancer Institute

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/infectious-agents/hpv-and-cancer#:~:text=Research%20has%20found%20that%20it,lead%20to%20precancerous%20cervical%20cells>