



CERVICAL HEALTH GLOSSARY

Anesthetic – A drug used to prevent pain during surgery.

Bacteria - Very small living organisms made of only one cell. Some cause disease and infection in humans, but others are very helpful to humans.

Biopsy – A test in which a tiny sample of tissue is taken from the body to be tested at a laboratory.

Cone Biopsy is a particular type of biopsy used to take a sample of tissue from the cervix. It can be used for diagnosis or treatment.

Benign - A condition or growth that is NOT cancerous. This means that it does not spread to other parts of the body or invade and destroy nearby tissue. Benign tumors usually grow slowly.

Cancer - The abnormal growth of cells that destroy healthy tissue.

Cauterization - The burning of tissue by a special instrument to stop bleeding.

Cervical Cancer – Occurs when the cells on the cervix undergo changes and develop into cancer.

Cervical Dysplasia – The growth of abnormal cells on the cervix. Abnormal cells may become cancer if not detected and treated in the early stages.

Cervix – The opening to the uterus (womb) that connects the uterus with the vagina (birth canal).

Chemotherapy – A type of drug used to treat or control cancer.

Colposcopy – An exam in which the cervix is looked at with a magnifying tool called a colposcope.

Colposcope – A magnifying tool used to closely examine the cervix.

Colposcopist – A doctor who performs the colposcopy examination.

Cryotherapy – A procedure that uses freezing through a cold wand to destroy abnormal cells from the cervix.

Douching – The internal cleansing of the vagina with a water solution.

Gynecologist – A doctor who specializes in women’s reproductive systems.

Healthcare Provider – A person who works to promote health and identify, prevent, and/or treat illness or disability. This may include a physician/doctor, nurse, nurse practitioner, midwife, or Community Health Representative (CHR).



HPV (Human Papillomavirus) – A common virus that can cause abnormal cell changes on the cervix that may lead to cervical cancer if left untreated.

Hysterectomy – An operation to remove the uterus (womb). Sometimes the ovaries or cervix are also removed.

Incidence Rates - The number of new occurrences of a condition (or disease) in a population over a period of time.

Laser Surgery – A treatment in which a laser beam destroys abnormal cells on the cervix.

LEEP (Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure) – A treatment in which an electric wire loop removes a very thin slice of tissue from the cervix.

Malignant - Cancerous cells that have the ability to spread, invade, and destroy tissue. Malignant cells tend to grow quickly. Some are resistant to treatment and may return after being removed or destroyed.

Microscope – A tool used to magnify objects too small to be seen by the naked eye.

Pap Test – A Pap test checks for changes in the cells of the cervix.

Prevalence – The measure of a condition (or disease) in a population at a given point in time or over a given time period (e.g., a year).

Reproductive System – A system within the female body that includes the external genitals and internal organs such as the uterus (womb), vagina, ovaries and cervix (opening to the uterus).

Risk Factor – Factors that may increase a person's chances of developing cancer.

Solution (Schiller test) – A test that uses a staining solution to change the color of abnormal cells on the cervix. The solution smells like vinegar.

Speculum - A tool used to open the vagina in a Pap test or a Colposcopy.

STI (Sexually transmitted infection) – A variety of infections that are transmitted through sexual contact e.g., HPV, Chlamydia, gonorrhea are the most common. STI can be either bacterial or viral.

Uterus –Part of the female reproductive system where the baby grows when a woman is pregnant. Also called the womb.

Vagina – Part of the female reproductive system that leads from the uterus to the outside of the body. It is also known as the birth canal. A man's erect penis is inserted into the vagina during vaginal intercourse.

Virus – A tiny organism smaller than bacteria that can enter cells and change their function. Viruses can cause infections and disease in humans.

