

What are the signs and symptoms?

In the early stages there may be no signs and symptoms but some women may have noticed:

- bleeding between periods or after intercourse
- bleeding anytime after your periods have stopped
- unpleasant vaginal discharge

In advanced disease symptoms may also include:

- back pain
- blood in your urine
- pain when passing urine
- rectal bleeding
- swelling of the legs

These symptoms may also be due to other conditions, you should seek a medical opinion. (RCN Gynaecological Cancer, March 1999).

Diagnosing Cancer of the Cervix

A full medical history will be undertaken and a number of other tests may be carried out before a definite diagnosis can be made. This may include:

- vaginal examination
- colposcopy (look at the cervix with a small microscope)
- biopsy, (a small piece of tissue taken from the cervix for further examination under a microscope)

- examination under anaesthetic (EUA), to examine the cervix, uterus, rectum and bladder while you are asleep
- MRI scan. See CCO leaflet No 21
- Intravenous Urogram (IVU), which shows up any abnormalities in the kidneys or urinary system

Other investigations may be added to these to allow the doctor to determine the site and stage of the cancer, in order to plan your treatment.

Stages of Cancer

Staging is a process of investigations which may be used to determine type/size of the tumour and if there is any spread. Staging is important to help decide treatment options.

Stages of Cancer of the Cervix

The following stages are used for cancer of the cervix.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Stage 1 | Cancer found only in the Cervix |
| Stage 2 | Cancer extends beyond the Cervix into the upper part of the Vagina. |
| Stage 3 | Cancer extends to the pelvic wall and lower third of the Vagina. |
| Stage 4 | Cancer extends beyond the true pelvis into other organs, i.e. Bladder, Rectum |

Recurrent Disease Recurrent disease means the cancer has come back (recurred) after it has been treated.

Treatment Options

There are three main treatment options for cancer of the Cervix, it may be that one or a combination of treatments will be recommended to you.

- Surgery
- Radiotherapy
- Chemotherapy

The type of treatment best for you will be decided by your consultant in discussion with yourself.

Clinical Trials

Clinical trials are research studies involving patients which compare a different type of medical care with the best treatment currently available. You may be approached regarding a clinical trial which your consultant or specialist nurse will be able to discuss with you. CancerBacup produce a booklet which may be helpful to you.

Surgery

Surgical treatment involves the removal of the cervix and uterus (Total Abdominal Hysterectomy), sometimes the lymph nodes are removed as well (Wertheims/Radical Hysterectomy). On occasion the ovaries and tubes will also be removed, this is then called Total

Abdominal Hysterectomy and Bilateral Salpingo - Oophorectomy (TAH + BSO). A Radical Trachelectomy is an operation removing the tumour - which may help preserve fertility. This is a possible option for early stage disease. (See leaflet 'Trachelectomy')

Radiotherapy

See C.C.O. Information Leaflet 2.7

Radiotherapy treatment is given from the outside from a machine called a linear accelerator. Treatment can also be internal, this is given by placing a tube containing a radiotherapy treatment source in the Vagina (under sedation or anaesthetic) for a period of time, similar to a large tampon.

The type of radiotherapy and length of time will be planned and decided individually between the doctor and yourself. (see Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology radiotherapy booklet for more information).

Following radiotherapy you may suffer from vaginal dryness and narrowing. Scar tissue may slowly develop in the vagina resulting in either narrowing or shortening of the vagina. Your doctor, nurse or therapy radiographer may advise you to use a vaginal dilator and will discuss this with you. In some cases Chemotherapy and Radiotherapy together may be a treatment option.

Chemotherapy

Depending on the type and stage of your cancer, your doctor may suggest chemotherapy treatment. (see Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology booklet & specific information sheets).

Life and Relationships

Most people feel overwhelmed when they are told they have cancer.

- Many different emotions arise which can cause confusion.
- Reactions differ from one person to another.
- There is no right or wrong way to feel.
- You may experience the whole range of personal emotions and reactions both similar or different from family and friends.
- Support and guidance is available in coping with these feelings.
- Many people find great comfort in their faith and or religious and spiritual beliefs.

Following the diagnosis of cancer and your subsequent treatment, you may experience physical changes. There may be some issues/concerns you wish to raise /explore, i.e.

- Body Image
- Weight Gain/loss
- Sexual Health
- Menopause Symptoms
- Others

Your support nurse will be able to support you by explaining about the issue/ concern and provide advice and information if required. This may help you adjust/cope with these changes. This may include involvement of other members of the Health Care Team (HCT) i.e.

- Dietician
- Lymphoedema Practitioner
- Physiotherapist
- Occupational Therapist and your Primary Health Care Team (PHCT), General Practitioner (GP), District Nurse (DN), Community Macmillan Nurse (CM)

You may not be aware of who can help with changes in social and financial matters, but your support nurse can put you in touch with the relevant people who can provide guidance and advice in these and other aspects, including child-care, how to tell the children and practical day to day issues.

You may wish to explore information and coping methods to help yourself. Therefore the following booklets may be helpful, (there are many others).

- Adjusting to life after cancer - CancerBacup
- Close relationships & cancer - Cancerlink
- Life with cancer - Cancerlink
- Sexuality & Cancer - CancerBacup
- Body image and sexuality - Cancerlink

Complementary Therapies

Complementary therapies may be helpful to you and your family. There are many different types i.e.

- Reflexology
- Massage
- Relaxation

and many others. Your support nurse can advise you by providing information regarding the appropriateness for you and how to access them.

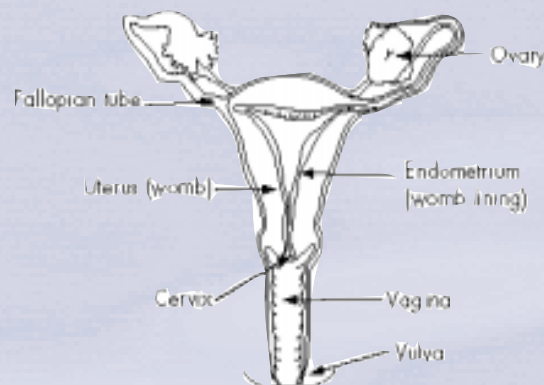
Your Follow Up Care

Your Gynaecology Support Nurse/ Clinical Nurse Specialist named on this leaflet will be able to offer you and your family advice, information and support regarding your cancer, subsequent treatment and associated health issues.

Equal Opportunities

The hospital is committed to promoting an environment, which provides equal opportunities for all patients, visitors and staff. If you have special requirements such as dietary needs, interpreter services, disability needs or a preference for a female doctor, please do not hesitate to discuss this with a member of staff who will try to help you.

This leaflet has been written to help you understand about Cancer of the Cervix - (Cervical Cancer), its diagnosis, treatment and support available. You may wish to discuss some aspects with your doctor or support nurse (named at the back of this leaflet)



What is Cancer?

The organs of the body are made up of cells. Cancer is a disease of these cells. The cells normally divide in an orderly manner. Sometimes the cells divide out of control - developing into a lump/tumour. A tumour which is malignant consists of cancer cells which have the ability to spread beyond the original site, destroying surrounding tissue, sometimes they can break away and spread to other parts of the body.

The Cervix

The cervix is the lower part of the uterus, often called the neck of the womb. Most of the cervix is visible from the vagina. It is from a small opening in the centre of the cervix (cervical os) that smears are taken.

Situated close to the cervix is a collection of small glands called lymph nodes. The lymph nodes make up part of the lymphatic system, which is one of the body's defence systems.

(see diagram) Nordin (1999) pl

How does Cancer of the Cervix develop?

We may not know the exact cause of your cancer, but some wart virus infections (Human Papilloma Virus) have been linked to cancer of the cervix. Cancer of the cervix can take many years to develop. There are two main types of cervical cancer, one (squamous) forms on the outside of the cervix and this is the one detected by the smear test, the other (adeno) is found deeper in the cervix and is more difficult to detect.

Approximately 3,400 women each year are diagnosed as having cervical cancer. The incidences and deaths from cancer of the cervix are falling, due it is thought to the cervical screening programme. (ONS 1998)

Support Networks Available

Further information, advice and support is available for you/partner family from:

Locally

CANCER RESOURCE STORE
Tel: 0151 709 6161
SEFTON CANCER SUPPORT GROUP
Tel: 0151 521 5179
CANCER SUPPORT CENTRE
Tel: 0151 726 8934

Nationally

CANCERBACUP
Tel: 0808 800 1234
CANCERLINK
Tel: 0808 808 0000
MACMILLAN INFORMATION
Tel: 0845 601 6161
GYNAE C
Tel: 01793 338885
JO'S TRUST
Tel: 01327 361787

Website information may be obtained from your hospital, local and national support networks above.

Ask your support nurse for a free copy of the Cancer Guide, which can guide, support and inform you through your cancer experience.

Personal contact

Name

Tel No

Support Nurse

Hospital Macmillan Nurse

District Nurse

Other

Questions you may wish to ask

1

2

3

4

5

References

Nordin A (1999) Patient Pictures - Gynaecology, Health Press Ltd, Oxford.

Office for National Statistics (1998) Cancer Statistics Registration 1992. MBI No 25 London, The Stationary Office.

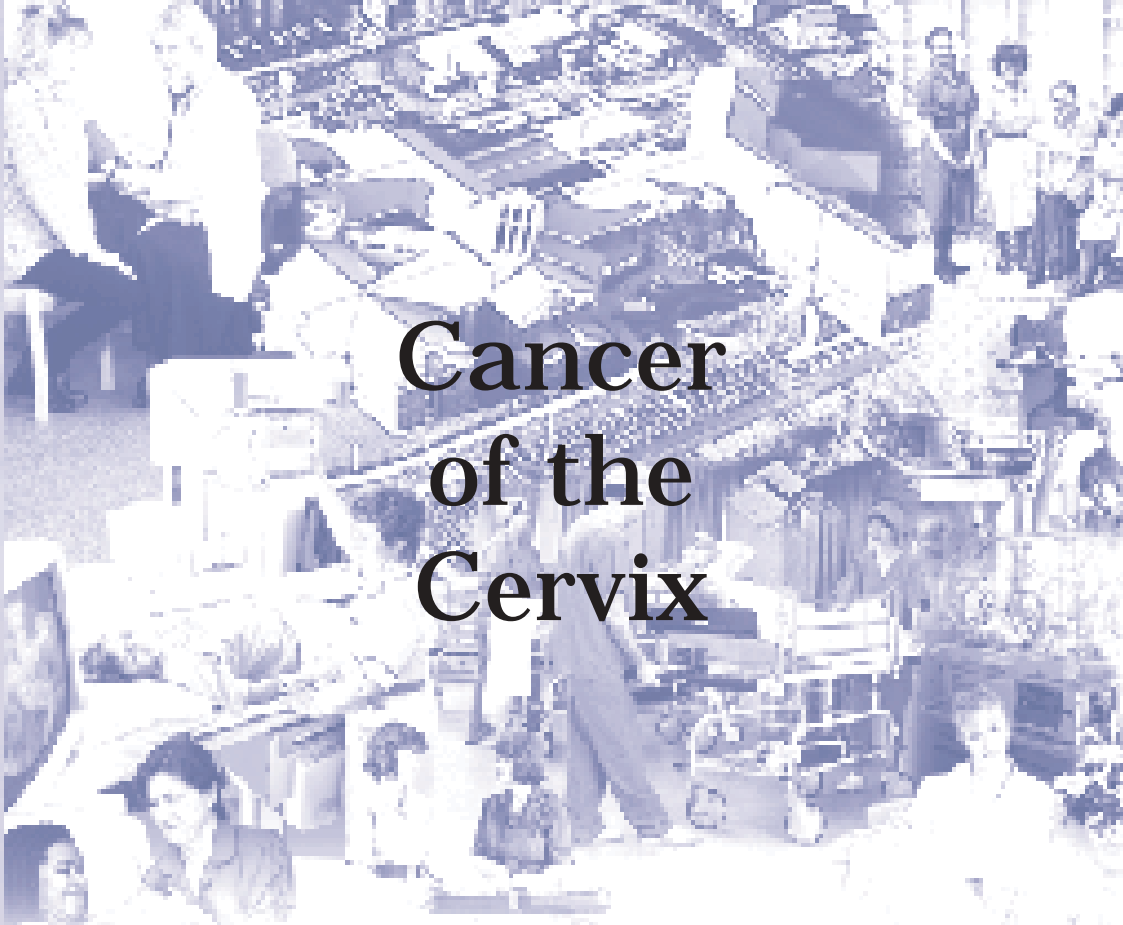
Blake P, Lambert H, Crawford R (1998) Gynaecological Oncology: A guide to clinical management, Oxford University Press

National Cancer Institute. CancerNet (1999) Cervical Cancer.


BBC/Macmillan Cancer Relief. The Cancer Guide (1997)

CancerBacup (1993) Understanding Cancer of the Cervix

CancerBacup (1996) Understanding Clinical Trials



Cancer of the Cervix

Liverpool Women's Hospital 
NHS Trust

Liverpool Women's Hospital
Crown Street, Liverpool L8 7SS

Telephone: 0151 708 9988
Visit our Web site at www.lwh.org.uk.

LWH/40/02.02

Liverpool Women's Hospital 
NHS Trust