

Dear Shamiso

Well done for asking, Shamiso! Cervical cancer affects the opening to the womb known as the cervix. It is the most common cancer among women in Zimbabwe and yet very few people know about it. If treated early, it can be completely cured.

A woman is at greater risk of getting cervical cancer if:

- she began to have sex at a young age (within a few years of starting her period)
- she's had many sex partners
- her partner has had many sex partners
- she's had genital warts
- she has HIV or AIDS
- she is older than 35.

Some women in Zimbabwe are now suffering from cervical cancer when they are still in their 20s. Think twice about having sex while you are a teenager and take care of yourself. Once you are sexually active, you should have a test called a Pap Smear once every year if you are in a high-risk group and once every three years if not. Most hospitals and clinics provide this test. No woman needs to die of cervical cancer if it is found early.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- What have you learnt about cervical cancer? Talk to your female friends and relatives. Tell them about the Pap Smear.
- Go through the list in Auntie Stella's letter. Are you or your partner at risk of getting cervical cancer when you are older? If yes, find out more about cervical cancer and how to get tested.
- **EITHER**
 - Invite a nurse to come and talk to you about cervical cancer, what it is, how it can be diagnosed and treated.
- **OR**
 - Do some research about cervical cancer by visiting a clinic or library. Prepare a short report to share with your friends and relatives.

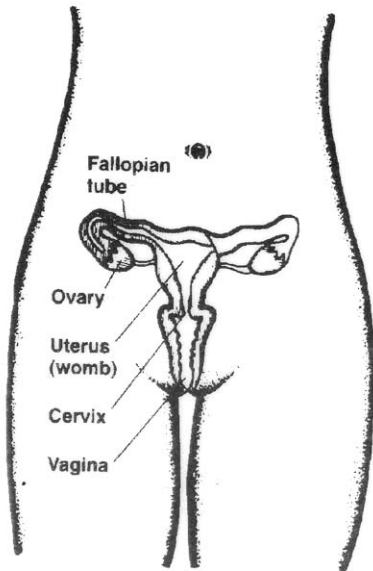


Diagram of the cervix