Introduction
The cervix is the lower part of the uterus. There are many different disorders that may affect the cervix.

Some cervix disorders are related to changes in the cells of the cervix. Cancer of the cervix is the second most common cancer in women worldwide. Though most changes in the cells of the cervix are not cancerous, it is important to check the health of your cervix regularly to ensure you do not have cervical cancer or a serious inflammation of the cervix.

This reference summary will help you understand cervix disorders. It discusses common disorders of the cervix as well as diagnosis and prevention.

The Female Reproductive System
The cervix is a part of a woman’s reproductive system. The reproductive system is made up of organs involved in producing offspring. The female reproductive organs are located in the pelvis, between the urinary bladder and the rectum.

The cervix is the lower, narrower part of the uterus. It is a passageway that connects the uterus to the vagina. During a menstrual period, blood flows from the uterus through the cervix into the vagina.

The vagina leads to the outside of the body. The cervix makes thick, slippery fluid called mucus.
During sex, mucus helps sperm move from the vagina, through the cervix, and into the uterus.

When an egg is released from an ovary, it goes down to the uterus through the Fallopian tube, where it may be fertilized by sperm. A fertilized egg may attach to the wall of the uterus so that it may continue growing.

If a woman gets pregnant, the fetus stays in the uterus until delivery. The uterus is able to expand a lot.

During pregnancy, the cervix is tightly closed to help keep the baby inside the uterus. During childbirth, the cervix opens to allow the baby to pass through the vagina.

**Cervix Disorders**

Disorders of the cervix affect many women. Finding and treating these disorders early can help women prevent complications.

Many women fear cancer when abnormal cells are found in their cervix. However, women with cervical cell changes rarely have cancer. Cervical dysplasia is when there are abnormal cells in the cervix that are not cancer. Often no treatment is needed for mild dysplasia. However, severe cervical dysplasia may lead to cervical cancer if left untreated.

Other common cervix disorders include:
- Cervical polyps and cysts
- Cervicitis

The following sections will look at each of these common cervix disorders more closely.

Cervical cells may also undergo changes due to infections or changes in hormones during pregnancy or menopause.

**Cervical Polyps and Cysts**

Cervical cells may go through changes due to polyps or cysts. Polyps are abnormal growths of tissue. Cysts are growths that may be filled with fluid or other material.

This document is for informational purposes and is not intended to be a substitute for the advice of a doctor or healthcare professional or a recommendation for any particular treatment plan. Like any printed material, it may become out of date over time. It is important that you rely on the advice of a doctor or a healthcare professional for your specific condition.
Often cervical polyps and cysts don’t cause any symptoms. They may be found during a regular pelvic exam.

Cervical polyps are usually removed and tested. In most cases, cervical polyps are benign, and noncancerous.

Cervical cysts may form when the outer tissue of the cervix grows over tissue that produces mucus. Mucus becomes trapped and a cyst forms.

Cysts usually don’t require treatment. However, cysts may be removed and tested if you have abnormal bleeding or discharge, pelvic pain, or pain during sexual intercourse. These symptoms may be caused by cervical cancer.

**Cervicitis**

Cervicitis is another common disorder of the cervix that can also cause cervical cells to go through changes. Cervicitis is inflammation and swelling of the cervix.

Symptoms of cervicitis may include changes in vaginal discharge or bleeding between menstrual periods. Pain during intercourse and frequent, painful urination are also symptoms of cervicitis. However, sometimes cervicitis doesn’t cause any symptoms.

Often cervicitis is caused by a sexually transmitted infection. However, it can also be caused by an allergic reaction or overgrowth of bacteria. Sexually transmitted infections are a category of infections that are spread via sexual activities, such as vaginal intercourse, oral sex, or anal sex.

Prescription medications can usually successfully treat cervicitis. The doctor may decide not to recommend medication if the cervicitis is not caused by a sexually transmitted infection.

**Tests & Diagnosis**

Cervical disorders are usually found during a pelvic exam or a Pap test. These tests look for changes to the cells of the cervix.
A pelvic exam checks if internal female organs are normal. A healthcare professional will feel for any lumps or changes. They will also use a speculum to open the vagina and look at the cervix. A speculum is an instrument used to widen an opening of the body to make it easier to look inside. Samples may be taken for a Pap test during a pelvic exam.

A Pap smear test is one of the best ways to detect changes in cervical cells. It is named after the doctor who made it popular, Dr. Papanicolaou. Most cases of cervical cancer can be prevented by getting regular Pap tests.

The goal of a Pap smear test is to obtain a specimen from the cervix using a swab, or smear. The specimen is sent to a lab to be analyzed.

Changes in cervical cells may lead to cancer if not found and treated in its early stages. Also, the chances of successfully treating cervical cancer are higher if it is found early. When found early, most cases of cervical changes or cancer can be cured. You owe it to yourself to have Pap smears on a regular basis!

Another test that may be done is an HPV, or human papillomavirus, test. If a woman is infected with HPV, it may cause cell changes in the cervix.

Most HPV infections go away on their own. However, sometimes they don’t. This may cause the infected cells to become precancerous. If these cells aren’t found and treated, they can develop into cervical cancer.

Most infections of HPV don’t cause any symptoms. The HPV test may find HPV before there are changes to the cervix.

If a Pap test finds abnormal cells, a colposcopy may be done. During this test, a special lighted magnifying device is used to examine the vulva, vagina, and cervix.

If the doctor finds an abnormal spot during a colposcopy, he or she may remove the whole thing or just a piece of it. The removed tissue will be sent to a pathologist to be tested.
If there are no obvious abnormalities on the outer part of the cervix, the doctor may scrape the inside of the cervix. This is in case there are abnormalities that cannot be seen.

Summary
A cervix disorder is a change in the normal functioning of the cervix. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus. Most cervix disorders are related to changes in the cells of the cervix.

Almost always, women with cell changes don’t have cancer. Cervical dysplasia is when there are abnormal cells in the cervix that are not cancer. Other common cervical disorders include cervical polyps and cysts, as well as cervicitis.

Cervix disorders are usually found during a pelvic exam or a Pap test. Other tests may include an HPV test and a colposcopy.

Many cervical cell changes are very common. When cell changes are found and treated early almost all women can avoid complications.