

Young Black Women Face More Persistent HPV Infection

April 5, 2012

Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection lingers longer in college-aged black women than their white counterparts, and this could be linked to higher rates of cervical cancer, according to a new study presented at the American Association of Cancer Research in Chicago and reported by [MedlinePlus](#).

HPV is a common sexually transmitted infection that can be spread to both men and women through sex or simple skin-on-skin contact. What's more, some strains of the virus can cause cervical cancer and death.

In 2004, researchers performed Pap test screenings for HPV infection every six months on 326 white women and 113 black women enrolled at the University of South Carolina. Scientists followed participants through their college years to identify and assess persistent HPV infection.

The findings? While the rate of new high-risk HPV infection was similar in both racial groups, scientists observed that among black women the infection usually lasted longer. Findings showed 56 percent of the black women screened were still infected two years after they were first diagnosed, compared with 24 percent of white women. This means that at any visit black women were 1.5 times more likely to test positive for high-risk HPV infection.

In addition, other study findings showed that black women are 40 percent more likely to develop cervical cancer and two times more likely to die of the disease than white women. Previously, this discrepancy was attributed to racial disparities caused by black women's lack of access to health care. Now, scientists are assessing genetic or other biological factors as well.

But the good news is women can protect themselves from cervical cancer by getting regular Pap test screenings. What's more, a three-shot HPV vaccination protects against the four varieties of HPV that are most likely to cause cervical cancer. "African-American women may benefit even more from the HPV shots," said Kim E. Creek, PhD, professor of pharmaceutical and biomedical sciences at the South Carolina College of Pharmacy in Charleston.

HPV vaccination is recommended for boys and girls ages 11 and 12 and for young women ages 13

to 26 who haven't been previously vaccinated for HPV.

[Click here](#) to read why getting vaccinated with all three HPV shots has proved difficult for many minority women.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/HPV-persistence-blackwomen-22203-8497>