



Prepared for: _____
 DOB: ____/____/____
 From Dr. _____

Diagnosis: ASC-US Pap test, positive for high-risk HPV

YOUR DIAGNOSIS

Your doctor recently took cells from your cervix and vagina for a Pap test. Another doctor at a lab looked at those cells up close to see if there were any abnormal changes. **The report your doctor received from the lab states that you have atypical squamous cells of undetermined significance (ASC-US).**

This means some of your cervical cells were mildly abnormal, but the meaning of the abnormal changes is not clear.

ASC-US is the most common abnormal Pap test finding.¹ It does not mean you have cervical cancer. Most of the time, cell changes seen in ASC-US are caused by irritation or infection. In your case, another test was done on your cervical cells. **That test found that the cervical cells are infected with a high-risk type of human papillomavirus (HPV).**

HPV is a common virus that is spread by skin-to-skin contact, including sexual contact. Genital HPV infection is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States, especially among young people.^{2,3} Most sexually active people will get a genital HPV infection at some time in their lives.^{3,4}

Being infected with HPV may not mean your sex partner is having sex with other people. It may not mean you or your partner recently had sex with an infected partner. The HPV virus can hide in cervical cells for many years; so even if you have been with just 1 partner for a long time, you can still become infected with HPV if either one of you ever had sex with an infected person.

There are about 40 types of HPV that can cause genital infections.^{3,4} Some types of HPV are called “high-risk” because they can cause changes in cervical cells that, over time, could lead to cancer.⁵ Long-lasting (persistent) genital infection with a high-risk type of HPV is the main cause of cervical cancer.⁵

You may be alarmed to find out you are infected with a high-risk type of HPV. Keep in mind that even though abnormal cells have been found on your cervix, most women who are infected with HPV will not develop precancerous changes or cancer.⁶ Quite often, when a healthy woman younger than 30 gets a genital HPV infection, her body will destroy the virus, her cervical cells will return to normal, and she will not have any long-lasting health problems.^{1,3,6,7}

Studies suggest that whether a woman develops cervical cancer depends on several factors acting together with high-risk HPV infection. Some of the known and possible factors that may increase the risk of cancer in women with HPV infection include the following^{1,4,6}:

- Cigarette smoking
- Infection with another sexually transmitted disease (especially HIV)
- A history of cancer
- Having a weak immune system resulting from medical treatment (such as an organ transplant) or an illness such as AIDS

DO I NEED MORE EXAMS OR TESTS?

Because you are infected with a high-risk type of HPV, your doctor may want to view your cervix and vagina up close to look for abnormal changes.^{1,7} To do this, your doctor will use a **colposcope**—a device with a bright light and lenses (like binoculars) that enlarges the view of your vagina and cervix.

While viewing your cervix with the colposcope, your doctor might obtain a sample of cells using either a soft brush or a small scoop (curette).^{1,7} Those cells will be sent to a lab where another doctor will view them up close to look for cells that have changes more severe than ASC-US. If no such changes are found, your doctor may advise that you have another HPV test in 12 months or 2 follow-up Pap tests, 1 in 6 months and another in 12 months.^{1,7}

If your cervical cells changed a lot, you may need treatment to remove abnormal cells that could progress to cancer.⁸ Your treatment options may include⁹:

- **LEEP (loop electrosurgical excision procedure).** A heated loop of wire is used to cut out the abnormal tissue and a very small rim of healthy tissue around it.
- **Cryotherapy (freezing).** A very cold probe is placed on the abnormal tissue. The cold destroys the tissue. In about 6 to 8 weeks, healthy cells will replace those that were destroyed.
- **Laser therapy.** Abnormal tissue is destroyed by a beam of

This report is provided to help you better understand your pathology results. It is intended only for information purposes and does not include all of the available knowledge about your diagnosis. Nor is it meant to advise you about health care decisions or substitute for professional care. Always seek the advice of a qualified health care provider with any questions you may have regarding your medical condition. Remember that only you and your physician can determine your best care plan based on your medical history and clinical circumstances.

laser light.

- **Conization.** A laser beam or surgical knife is used to remove a cone-shaped piece of abnormal tissue from the cervix. A small rim of surrounding normal tissue will be removed as well. A doctor will examine the healthy tissue to confirm that it is free of abnormal cells.

Right now, there is no vaccine or other medical treatment to cure HPV infection. As long as your immune system is healthy, your body may destroy the virus on its own. This is especially true if you became infected with HPV before age 30 and you do not smoke.

WHAT CAN I DO TO STAY HEALTHY?

- Follow your doctor's advice about follow-up exams and tests, such as Pap and HPV tests and colposcope exams. Keep a record of the dates and results of any tests or procedures you have; it might come in handy if you ever change doctors or insurance providers or if you have a genital health problem in the future.
- Take steps to keep from spreading HPV to others. Using condoms will reduce the risk of spreading HPV. Only the skin that is covered by or comes in contact with the condom is protected from HPV. The virus can infect any uncovered skin on the genitals, groin, thighs, anus, and rectum and possibly in the mouth.
- If you are 26 years of age or younger, talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated against HPV.^{3,4} Two vaccines (Cervarix® and Gardasil®) are available to protect females against the types of HPV that cause most cervical cancers.³ Gardasil also protects against the "low-risk" types of HPV that cause genital warts.³ Three shots are needed for full protection. You should get the shots even though you have already been diagnosed with a genital HPV infection, because the shots can keep you from becoming infected with other types of HPV.⁴
- Let your doctor know if you have pain or any other new symptoms or if you notice a change in the amount, look, or smell of your vaginal discharge. Many problems that affect a woman's genitals, including sexually transmitted diseases, cause similar symptoms. Your doctor can find the exact cause of your symptoms, offer treatment, and teach you how to

take steps to keep from spreading an infection to others or becoming infected again.

- If you smoke, quit. Smoking may increase your risk for cervical cancer. If you are having a hard time quitting smoking, talk to your doctor. He or she may be able to help you quit.

OTHER RESOURCES

National Cervical Cancer Coalition

Telephone: (800) 685-5531

Home page: www.nccc-online.org

National HPV and Cervical Cancer Prevention Resource Center American Social Health Association

Telephone: 800-783-9877

Home page: www.ashastd.org/hpv/hpv_overview

National Women's Health Information Center

Telephone: (800) 994-WOMAN (800-994-9662)

Home page: www.4woman.gov

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