

Study Material: Cervical Cancer Introduction

- **Cervical cancer is a serious health concern, primarily caused by persistent infection with high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV).**
- **Early detection through screening and preventive measures can significantly reduce morbidity and mortality.**

Causes of Cervical Cancer

- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Infection:** Persistent infection with high-risk HPV strains (especially types 16 and 18) is the leading cause.
- **Multiple Sexual Partners:** Increases the risk of HPV exposure.
- **Early Age of Sexual Activity:** Higher risk of acquiring persistent HPV infection at a younger age.
- **Smoking:** Carcinogens in tobacco contribute to cervical cell damage.
- **Weakened Immune System:** Conditions like HIV/AIDS increase susceptibility to HPV infections.
- **Long-term Use of Oral Contraceptives:** Prolonged use (5+ years) may slightly increase risk.
- **Poor Hygiene and Lack of Screening:** Contribute to the progression of undiagnosed precancerous lesions.

Signs and Symptoms

Early-Stage Symptoms

- **Often asymptomatic in initial stages**
- **Abnormal vaginal bleeding:**
 - Postcoital bleeding
 - Intermenstrual bleeding
 - Postmenopausal bleeding
- **Unusual vaginal discharge (watery, bloody, or foul-smelling)**

Advanced-Stage Symptoms

- **Persistent pelvic pain or back pain**
- **Pain during sexual intercourse (dyspareunia)**
- **Difficulty in urination or bowel movements**
- **Swelling in the legs (lymphatic obstruction)**