



Health Tips For Women's Wellness

ISSUE: JANUARY 2024



CareNine is a pregnancy support program structured to educate, guide and reassure 'mothers-to-be' with the help of counselling from specialists; all under one roof.



Women's Health: What is cervical cancer: one of the most preventable cancers?

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers and yet many women have to suffer through the symptoms due to lack of awareness. Here we discuss the basic knowledge every woman should have.



Preconception Care: Father's role in preconception care: what should you do?

Women get pregnant but a pregnancy should involve active participation of both the parents. In this guide, we'll discuss how doctors can support their wives extensively in the preconception stage.



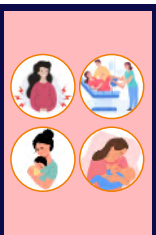
CareNine: Managing pregnancy with cervical shortening

Cervical shortening can happen to any woman during pregnancy. How can you be sure if you're at risk? What is the treatment? Read on to find out.



CareNine Beyond: Stages of early childhood development

Young children grow at their own pace but we can classify their growth in 5 major stages of childhood development. Learn more about them here.



CareNine: The four stages of labour and birth



Labour and birth can feel intimidating, especially if you're going through it for the first time. Get an overview of the four stages of labour and birth here to brace yourself for the journey ahead.



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Women's Health:

What is Cervical Cancer: One of the Most Preventable Cancers?

Every year, we observe the World cervical cancer awareness month globally in the month of January. The theme of this year's healthcare event is "Ending cervical cancer within a few generations." It's a vital conversation to have, as cervical cancer is one of the most common cancers in women while being an easily preventable one.

What is cervical cancer?

The cervix comprises two types of cells: the squamous cells and the glandular cells. 80-90% of cervical cancer cases start in the squamous cells.

Cervical cancer develops when abnormal cells in the cervix grow and multiply uncontrollably. These abnormal cells can be caused by a sexually transmitted virus called human papillomavirus (HPV).

What are the symptoms?

Cervical cancer rarely has any symptoms in the early stage. Only when the cancer has advanced, one might notice:

- Irregular vaginal bleeding or discharge
- Pain during intercourse

The good news is that screening tests can detect cervical cancer and the presence of HPV virus quickly.

Why is it preventable?

Two key reasons why cervical cancer is considered highly preventable are:

- **Vaccination:** The HPV vaccine protects against the most common cancer-causing HPV strains. All children aged 9-14 should get their dose of HPV vaccine.
- **Screening:** Regular Pap smears and HPV tests can detect precancerous changes in the cervix before they become cancerous. Early detection allows for timely treatment and prevents cancer from developing.

What are the risk factors for cervical cancer?

Most women get cervical cancer between the ages of 20 to 50. This is the period when you should go for screenings and keep an active tab on your health. Some other risk factors include:

- Smoking and consumption of tobacco products

- Long-term use of birth control pills
- Weaker immune system
- Family history, i.e., cases of cervical cancer in your mother or sister
- Getting pregnant before 17
- Having 3 or more full-term pregnancies
- Lack of regular cervical cancer screenings (Pap tests)
- Multiple sexual partners or early sexual activity

How often should you get screened?

Regular Pap tests can detect abnormal changes in the cervix cells before cancer develops. Early detection through screenings allows for timely treatment and significantly improves survival rates.

If you are at an average risk of having cervical cancer, the screening guidelines for you are:

- **From age 21-29:** have a Pap test once in 3 years
- **Between age 30-65:** have a Pap test once in 3 years. If you're at risk, then go for a high-risk HPV test.

Your healthcare provider can guide you better based on your individual condition and symptoms.

What are the preventive measures against cervical cancer?

- HPV vaccination is the greatest prevention against high-risk HPV infections.
- Young adults should have proper information on having safe sex to reduce HPV transmissions.
- Avoiding smoking and living a healthy lifestyle contributes to preventing the disease.
- Women with slight risk factors should also start getting screened at age 21 or earlier, as per your healthcare provider.

Despite its preventability, cervical cancer can be a threat to women due to the lack of awareness, stigma and limited access to healthcare systems. This is why it's important to talk about cervical cancer openly in our social circles and help women in prioritising their health.

Sources:

- Johns Hopkins
- WebMD
- Pace Hospitals



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Preconception Care: Father's role in preconception care: what should you do?

Preconception care plays a crucial role in ensuring a healthy pregnancy. While much emphasis is placed on maternal health, the role of fathers in preconception care is often overlooked. In India, where family dynamics significantly influence healthcare decisions, acknowledging and involving fathers in preconception care is essential for the well-being of both the mother and the child.

Why does the father's role matter?

- **Genetic contribution:** Fathers contribute equally to the genetic makeup of the child. Their health and lifestyle choices before conception significantly impact the baby's health and development.
- **Support system:** Emotional support from the father is crucial for the mental and emotional well-being of the mother. A supportive environment positively influences maternal health and pregnancy outcomes.
- **Lifestyle factors:** Fathers' lifestyle choices, such as smoking, alcohol consumption and diet, can affect sperm quality, which may impact fertility and the health of the baby.

Contribution of fathers in preconception care

- **Health check-up:** Regular health check-ups for fathers help identify and address any underlying health issues that might affect fertility or pregnancy outcomes.
- **Healthy lifestyle:** Encouraging fathers to adopt a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, a balanced diet and avoiding harmful substances, improves overall fertility and contributes to a healthier pregnancy.
- **Emotional support:** Being actively involved and supportive during preconception discussions and decisions creates a positive environment for both partners.
- **Visits to healthcare provider together:** Fathers can participate in the preconception stage by visiting the healthcare provider with their partners. It makes it easier to have conversations on family history and diagnose medical problems, if any.

- **Emotional preparation:** As much as mothers need emotional support, fathers too need to prepare themselves emotionally. A big change is about to occur in your life, so you should spend time doing several activities with your partner. Talk about your future plans and open up about your concerns. In a partnership, two can tackle any problem where you're together.
- **Plan for childbirth:** While the mother focuses on her overall health, fathers should plan for essentials like car seats, baby proofing, hiding sharp objects around the house and other such concerns for when the baby comes. This planning should start in the preconception stage itself so that you focus on every stage of childbirth. Later, you can also participate in preparing a hospital bag for the delivery time. Make sure to get involved in every stage to have a fulfilling experience of pregnancy.
- **Prepare to be a father:** Don't postpone this realisation to the day of delivery. You should start feeling the responsibility of being a father from day 1 of preconception itself. Talk to your healthcare provider about anything that you may need help with. You might have mood swings or anxiety for which you need medical assistance. Start taking active care of your health at this stage.

The role of fathers in preconception care is indispensable. Their active involvement in the preconception stage, during pregnancy and after birth cements their relationship with the baby too. Fathers should concentrate on growing closer to their baby even before birth and have as much skin-to-skin contact after delivery, as possible. It's time to recognize and empower fathers as equal partners in preconception health and on their journey to fatherhood.

Sources:

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- National Institute for Children's Health Quality
- Health Hub



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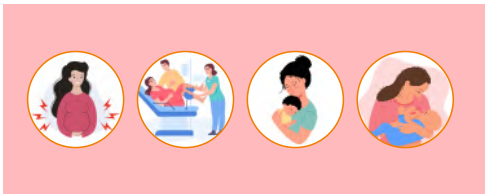
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CareNine: The four stages of labour and birth

When the day to meet your little one starts approaching, your happiness level rises but so does your anxiety. Labour and birth involve four major stages, each with its own purpose and pace. Once you're aware of all of them, it helps you navigate the situation better and make informed decisions.

Stage 1: Early Labour (Dilation)

Duration:

Varies but can take 12-24 hours for first-time mothers and 6-12 hours for subsequent deliveries.

What happens:

- **Cervical changes:** The cervix, the opening to the uterus, begins to soften (efface) and widen (dilate) to allow your baby's passage.
- **Contractions:** Mild to moderate contractions start, initially irregular and spaced far apart, gradually becoming stronger, longer and closer together.
- **Possible signs:** Backaches, cramps, watery discharge or a "show" (loss of mucus plug from the cervix).

Tips for stage 1:

- **Rest and relax:** You may feel energetic at first but conserve your energy for later stages.
- **Stay hydrated:** Drink plenty of fluids to maintain energy and prevent dehydration.
- **Listen to your body:** Eat light meals if you feel hungry, move around freely and change positions for comfort.
- **Practice relaxation techniques:** Deep breathing, meditation or visualisation can help manage discomfort.
- **Stay connected:** Reach out to your birth partner or healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns.

Stage 2: Active Labour (Delivery)

Duration:

Usually 2-4 hours but can be longer.

What happens:

- **Stronger contractions:** Contractions become more intense and frequent, lasting 30-60 seconds and occurring 2-5 minutes apart.
- **Baby descends:** The baby's head moves down the birth canal, putting pressure on your pelvis.
- **Pushing:** You may feel an urge to push with each contraction, helping your baby move through the birth canal.

Tips for stage 2:

- **Focus on pushing:** Listen to your body and push with each contraction as effectively as possible.
- **Change positions:** Experiment with different positions (squatting, kneeling, side-lying) to find one that feels comfortable and facilitates pushing.
- **Stay hydrated and energised:** Small sips of water or clear fluids can help.

- **Communicate with your healthcare provider:** Follow their instructions and voice any concerns you might have.

Stage 3: Delivery of the placenta (Afterbirth)

Duration:

Usually within 5-30 minutes after the baby is born.

What happens:

- **Placental separation:** The placenta, which nourished the baby during pregnancy, detaches from the uterine wall.
- **Delivering the placenta:** You may feel mild contractions as you deliver the placenta.

Tips for stage 3:

- **Continue skin-to-skin contact:** Hold your baby close as the placenta delivers, promoting bonding and warmth.
- **Stay relaxed:** Breathe deeply and avoid pushing to prevent complications.
- **Delivery of the placenta:** Your healthcare team will handle the delivery and examine the placenta for completeness.

Stage 4: Recovery (Bonding and Adjustment)

Duration:

The first two hours after delivery are crucial for bonding and establishing breastfeeding.

What happens:

- **Skin-to-skin contact:** Immediate and uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact promotes bonding, regulates the baby's temperature and stimulates breastfeeding.
- **Breastfeeding:** Initiate breastfeeding within the first hour, as colostrum, the first milk, is rich in antibodies and nutrients.
- **Monitoring:** Your healthcare team will monitor your vital signs and your baby's well-being.

Tips for stage 4:

- **Focus on your baby:** Enjoy this precious time of bonding with your new arrival.
- **Breastfeeding support:** Seek help from a lactation consultant if you encounter any challenges with breastfeeding.
- **Rest and recovery:** Prioritise sleep and rest to regain your energy after the long journey.
- **Seek support:** Don't hesitate to ask for help with feeding, diaper changes or anything else you need.

Now that you're prepared for labour and birth, keep in mind that these are natural processes and your experience might vary from others. It is important to stay aware so that you can report any variation to your healthcare provider instantly. Focus on your and your baby's health fully and stay positive.



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CareNine: Managing pregnancy with cervical shortening

Carrying a precious life within you is a joyous journey but sometimes unexpected hurdles can arise. You learn new things about your anatomy that you never knew before. Cervical shortening, a condition where the cervix thins and shortens prematurely, is one such concern for pregnant women. But remember, managing pregnancy with cervical shortening is possible with knowledge, support and the right care.

Understanding cervical shortening

- The cervix, the lower part of the uterus, connects the uterus to the vagina. During pregnancy, it gets longer and creates a distance between the outside and your baby. Towards the end of the pregnancy, the cervix can shorten again to prepare for the delivery.
- Cervical shortening occurs when your cervix weakens, shortens or opens up too early during the pregnancy. Untimely cervical shortening or cervical insufficiency, can lead to premature opening of the cervix, increasing the risk of preterm birth.
- While cervical shortening can occur at any stage of the pregnancy, it is most common in the second trimester, i.e. between 14 to 27 weeks of pregnancy.

Who is at the risk of having cervical shortening?

- Unusual cervix shape:** Women with irregularly shaped uterus or cervix can be more susceptible.
- Previous preterm birth:** Women who've delivered early before are at higher risk.
- Multiple pregnancy:** Carrying twins or triplets puts extra strain on the cervix.
- Cervical infections:** Certain infections or previous injuries can weaken the cervix. Previous surgeries on the cervix can also weaken it.
- Congenital malformations:** Some women naturally have a shorter cervix.
- Genetic disorder:** Genetic conditions like Ehlers-Danlos syndrome can also cause cervical trauma.

Symptoms of cervical shortening

- Pelvic pressure or heaviness
- Vaginal discharge or spotting
- Frequent Braxton Hicks contractions
- Pain in your belly

Diagnosis and management

- Transvaginal ultrasound (TVS):** This scan measures the cervical length accurately. Your healthcare provider can monitor using ultrasound till the 24th week of pregnancy.
- Cervical cerclage:** In some cases, surgical stitches might be placed around the cervix to keep it closed. However, women with twin or other multiple pregnancies doctor advise cerclage for safer confinement.
- Progesterone supplementation:** Vaginal progesterone helps support cervical strength.
- Pelvic rest:** Limiting strenuous activity and avoiding heavy lifting is crucial.
- Regular monitoring:** Close follow-up with your doctor is vital for assessing progress and adjusting care.

What can cervical shortening lead to?

While miscarriage and premature birth can be caused by cervical shortening, it can also lead to:

- Infection
- Cuts and tear on the cervix
- Internal bleeding
- Uterine rupture

How to prevent cervical shortening?

As cervical shortening is an unprecedented medical condition, there's no sure way to prevent it. However you can take the following steps to ensure a healthy pregnancy:

- Have a healthy and well-balanced diet.
- Take all your prenatal appointments seriously.
- Gain a healthy weight during pregnancy in consultation with your healthcare provider.
- Avoid alcohol, recreational drugs and tobacco products at all costs.
- Don't take any medication without medical approval.

Regular prenatal checkups are crucial for detecting cervical shortening early. Your healthcare provider will measure your cervical length through transvaginal ultrasound. If shortening is detected, they can instantly administer the required support.

Sources:

- CareNine
- Healthline
- Mayo Clinic
- Medical News Today



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CareNine Beyond: Stages of early childhood development

Childhood is a crucial phase for every new parent, as they witness the miraculous process of growth and transformation. But it can also get quite overwhelming. It's important to understand the five key stages of development in kids to stay ready and help your little one in their growth journey.

1. Newborns (0-3 Months)

- **Reflexes grow:** Newborns have a multitude of reflexes (like rooting and sucking) that help them adjust to life outside the womb.
- **Sensory exploration:** They start absorbing their surroundings through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell.
- **Bonding through communication:** Respond to their gurgles and coos, sing songs and talk softly to build a strong emotional connection.

2. Infants (4-12 Months)

- **Motor milestones:** Rolling over, sitting up, reaching for objects and eventually crawling and taking their first steps mark incredible progress.
- **Language development:** Cooing and babbling evolve into recognizable syllables and eventually simple words.
- **Object permanence:** They begin to understand that objects exist even when out of sight, leading to peek-a-boo becoming a favourite game. Their vision also gets fully developed.
- **Recognition:** Infants can start to recognize familiar faces, control their head movements and even bring their hands together.

3. Toddlers (1-3 Years)

- **Exploration explosion:** Curiosity reigns supreme as toddlers want to touch, taste and investigate everything. Childproofing becomes crucial at this stage.
- **The DIY phase:** Independence blossoms as toddlers want to dress themselves, eat on their own and assert their autonomy.
- **Temper tantrums:** Frustration builds as language skills lag behind desires, leading to meltdowns. Stay calm, offer choices and provide comfort.

4. Preschoolers (3-5 Years)

- **Playful learning:** Play becomes a vehicle for social, emotional and cognitive development. Encourage imaginative play, pretend-play and collaborative activities.
- **Enhanced motor skills:** At this stage, the motor skills get more refined. Children can play well and in a structured manner. It's a good time for toilet training as well.
- **Language boom:** Vocabulary expands rapidly and preschoolers start forming complete sentences and asking endless questions. Read together, answer their queries patiently and encourage storytelling.
- **Developing friendships:** Peer interaction becomes increasingly important as preschoolers learn to share, cooperate and resolve conflicts. Socialising opportunities like playdates and going to preschool can be beneficial.

5. School-age (6-17 Years)

- **Opinion building:** At this stage, kids slowly grow to form their own opinions. They become independent and grow the ability to draw inferences and read between the lines.
- **Language skills:** The kids get highly skilled at reading, writing and speaking at this time.
- **Emotional development:** This is the time for developing various emotions like jealousy, love and others while the skill to express them through words also enhances.

These are the common traits that develop in every kid at the given age range. In case of any delays, remember that every child develops at their own pace. Don't compare your child to others. You should celebrate their tiny achievements and provide positive reinforcement. However, if you notice any unnatural delay, seek medical counsel. A loving and supportive environment is crucial for a child's all-round development. Keep in touch with your healthcare provider to support your child's unique growth journey.

Sources:

- Children's Medical Center
- Medicine Net
- CPD Online College
- Gray Group International