

HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV)

Erica Frazier Stum

How HPV Changed My Life



Erica had been diagnosed with cervical cancer for the third time before she found out that her cervical cancer had been caused by HPV. Although she had several years of abnormal Pap tests, her doctors told her that it was okay and there was nothing to worry about. She had one colposcopy during the years of abnormal Pap tests.

In 2012, at the age of 27, Erica was diagnosed with stage 1b2 cervical cancer. She underwent a trachelectomy and lymphadenectomy to remove her cancer. She was declared cancer free, however, Erica's story doesn't end here. In 2014 she was diagnosed with a recurrence, this time the cancer was worse. The tumors were large and the cancer had metastasized. Erica underwent several rounds of chemotherapy and radiation. In March 2015, once again, Erica was told she was cancer free. In May 2015 the news came again, the cancer had returned for the third time.

Erica continues to live her life with recurrent metastatic cervical cancer today. She goes through continued treatments to enhance her quality of life. During the course of treatment Erica has researched her medical history. She discovered that she was first diagnosed with HPV in 2008, although she never knew of that diagnosis.

Erica has made it a mission to advocate for cervical cancer awareness. She hopes to help eradicate cervical cancer by educating individuals about the importance of HPV awareness, vaccination, and early screening. She stresses that HPV is a human issue, not just a female issue. The HPV vaccine not only protects against cervical cancer, it also reduces an individual's risk of vulvar, penile, anal, and oropharyngeal cancers.

Erica is a mother, wife, and teacher. You can find more about her story at www.tealelfs.com

Erica is one of 79 million persons in the US infected with HPV. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection, and transmission most commonly occurs in teens and young adults. Most people do not have symptoms or complications from HPV infection, and they are able to rid the virus on their own; however, persistent infection with high-risk HPV types can be dangerous. HPV causes most of the cases of cervical cancer in women and most of the anal, penile and oropharyngeal cancers in males. In addition, most cases of genital warts are caused by HPV.

There is no cure for HPV infection, although the infection usually goes away on its own. It is possible for the virus to remain in a "sleeping" or dormant state and be reactivated years later.

Fortunately, there is a safe and effective vaccine that protects against the most problematic types of HPV. The vaccine is most effective when given before the onset of sexual activity; therefore it is recommended for all boys and girls at age 11 or 12, and can be given alongside the other adolescent vaccines that are required for school. The vaccine can be given up to age 26.

The HPV vaccine is a cancer-prevention vaccine. Please ask your doctor about the HPV vaccine and protect yourself and your children from HPV associated cancers.

For more information, please visit www.vaccinateindiana.org

