

Cervical cancer is one of the few cancers where incidence and mortality have been falling within the last decades. It is natural to look at this in combination with the simple screening tool used for detection. A simple test can prove the early stages of cancer, and by this detection, early treatment can be initiated and death prevented.

National screening programs have been started in Norway and many other countries, which both inform women about risk factors for cervical cancer and symptoms of the disease and screen them for early detection of the cancer at regular intervals.

Combined, these preventive measures have been proven to reduce both the incidence and mortality of cervical cancer in the countries where they have been introduced. Many studies have shown that the most probable cause of cervical cancer is the presence of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). Recently, pharmaceutical companies have developed vaccines against the most common causative agents of cervical cancer – HPV-16 and HPV-18. The introduction of this vaccine, mainly to young girls before their sexual debut (9-12 years), is expected to reduce the incidence even further. Some countries have already included this vaccine in their national vaccination program, whereas in other countries the vaccine has to be purchased by the individual girl/woman. The vaccine has to be taken in three doses and the cost is still quite high. So, in countries where the vaccine is not included in the vaccination program or covered by the insurance, the availability of this vaccine is limited.