World Marks First Cervical Cancer Elimination Day

Victor Growth

1. Introduction

World Cervical Cancer Elimination Day was observed for the first time on 18 November 2025.

It marks a historic global initiative led by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem.

The event aims to accelerate global commitments toward HPV vaccination, screening programmes, and improved access to healthcare.

2. Background and Global Context

Cervical cancer is among the most preventable and treatable cancers if detected early.

Despite available preventive tools, it remains a major cause of cancer-related deaths among women, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

WHO's decision to designate this day seeks to unify global efforts and bring political attention to the issue.

3. Why Cervical Cancer? (Relevance & Burden)

Cervical cancer is caused primarily by persistent infection with high-risk HPV (Human Papillomavirus).

It is responsible for:

Over 95% of cervical cancer cases globally (WHO).

Significant mortality due to late detection and lack of screening.

Countries with limited access to vaccinations and screening contribute disproportionately to global cases.

4. WHO's Global Initiative for Elimination

WHO's strategy aims to achieve the "90-70-90" targets by 2030:

- 90% of girls fully vaccinated with the HPV vaccine by age 15.
- 70% of women screened with a high-performance test (HPV DNA test) at ages 35 and 45.
- 90% of women identified with cervical disease receiving treatment.

This coordinated approach can reduce cervical cancer incidence by 40% within a few decades.

5. Understanding Cervical Cancer

What it is

A type of cancer arising from the cervix, the lower part of the uterus.

Cause

- Mainly caused by high-risk HPV strains, especially HPV-16 and HPV-18.
- Spread through sexual contact.
- Persistent infection → abnormal cell changes → precancer → cancer.

Why it progresses silently

Initial stages often asymptomatic, leading to delayed diagnosis.

6. Early Symptoms Women Should Not Ignore

Abnormal vaginal bleeding:

1. Between periods
2. After intercourse
3. After menopause

Unusual vaginal discharge:

1. Foul odour
2. Change in colour
3. Persistent pelvic pain
4. Pain during intercourse
5. Heavier or prolonged menstrual cycles

UPSC Point: Early symptoms are non-specific, leading physicians to emphasize regular screening.

7. Prevention Strategies

Victor Growth

(A) HPV Vaccination

- Most effective preventive measure.
- Ideally administered before sexual debut (around ages 9–14).
- Recommended in national immunisation programs.

(B) Screening

- Pap smear test: detects precancerous changes.
- HPV DNA test: detects presence of high-risk HPV strains.

Recommended age group: 25–65 years.

(C) Awareness and Education

- Reducing stigma around reproductive health.
- Promoting health-seeking behaviour among women.
- Empowering communities to recognise symptoms.

8. Significance of the First Elimination Day (2025)

- Marks a milestone in the global health movement.
- Reinforces the possibility of eliminating a major cancer within the next decade.

Encourages governments to:

- Expand vaccination coverage
- Improve screening facilities
- Ensure accessible and affordable treatment

9. India-Specific Relevance (UPSC Angle)

India accounts for a large share of global cervical cancer cases.

The government has already:

- Included HPV vaccination in national immunisation guidelines (recent announcements).
- Strengthened screening under various health missions (like NHM).
- Awareness programmes and community health workers play a crucial role in rural settings.

10. Exam-Oriented Key Facts (Direct Prelims Points)

World Cervical Cancer Elimination Day – first

Victor Growth

observed in 2025.

- HPV infection accounts for over 95% of cervical cancer cases.
- WHO’s target: Vaccinate 90% of girls by age 15 by 2030.
- Recommended screening tools: Pap smear & HPV DNA test.
- Target screening age group: 25–65 years.

Facebook

Instagram

Youtube

Victor Growth