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FLORIDA HEALTH ENCOURAGES CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION



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Tallahassee, Fla.—January is Cervical Health Awareness Month and Florida Health encourages women to visit their health care provider to get screened for cervical cancer and learn more about preventing cervical cancer through lifestyle change and vaccination.

“This month, I encourage Florida's women to be mindful of the steps they can take to prevent and screen for cervical cancer,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “Vaccinations and regular screening remain essential choices to save lives through prevention and early detection.”

Cervical cancer, or cancer starting in the cervix, is the 10th leading cause of cancer deaths among women in Florida. Nearly all cervical cancers are caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a common virus that is passed from one person to another during sexual activity. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cervical cancer is the easiest gynecologic cancer to prevent, with regular screening tests and follow-up.

According to the CDC, to reduce risk or prevent cervical cancer women should:

- Get the HPV vaccine if you are between ages 9 and 26;
- Women between 21 and 65 years old should see their doctor regularly for a Pap test;
- Do not smoke; and
- Limit the number of sexual partners.

Completing the three dose HPV vaccination series can help prevent multiple cancers, including cervical cancer and cancer of the mouth and throat. The department's Immunization Section provides vaccinations for HPV through several programs.

Two screening tests can help prevent cervical cancer or find it early:

- The Pap test (or Pap smear) looks for precancers, cell changes on the cervix that might become cervical cancer if they are not treated appropriately.
- The HPV test looks for the virus that can cause these cell changes.

Talk to your medical provider about when a Pap test is most appropriate for you. Tests for specific HPV strains can support earlier diagnosis of cervical cancer. Women ages 50-64, who are uninsured and are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level can receive Pap tests through the department's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.

Learn more about the HPV Vaccine at

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/who/teens/vaccines/hpv.html>

Learn more about the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/cancer/breast-cancer/bccedp.html>.

Learn more about the department's Immunization Program at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/immunization/> or contact your local health office.

About the Florida Department of Health

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