Each January is recognized as Cervical Health Awareness Month . Each year in the U.S. approximately 12,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and more than 4,000 lives are lost as a result. This doesn't take into account the many thousands of women who have cervical abnormalities and abnormal Pap tests for reasons other than cancer, but who still undergo expensive and inconvenient follow-up exams and treatments.

Cervical cancer Is preventable

Cervical cancer is caused by specific types of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) , a common infection that almost everyone who is sexually active will have at some point. There are vaccines that block the types of HPV most often found with cervical diseases, and screening tests (such as Pap tests and HPV tests) that can identify women most at risk. We can prevent cervical cancer!

Vaccinate early (females and males ages 9-26 are eligible)

Pap test regularly (beginning at age 21)

HPV test when recommended

Cervical Cancer and Pap Test information

Cervical cancer is nearly 100 percent preventable, if it is detected early. In fact, the occurrence of deaths from cervical cancer has declined significantly over the last 20 to 30 years

Cervical cancer rates are higher among older women; however, cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (or CIN), the precursor lesion to cervical cancer, most often occurs among younger women. Screening younger women using the Papanicolaou (Pap) test is an important strategy that can actually prevent cervical cancer from developing almost 100 percent of the time.

Minority populations and persons of low socioeconomic status are affected disproportionately as well.

Studies that have identified risk factors associated with cervical cancer have shown that cervical cancer is closely linked to:

failure to receive regular Pap test screening

human papillomavirus (HPV) infection

certain sexual behaviors

immunosuppressive disorders such as HIV/AIDS

Experts agree that infection with certain strains of the HPV is one of the strongest risk factors for cervical cancer. The sexual behaviors specifically associated with greater risk are

intercourse at an early age, multiple male sexual partners, and sex with a male partner who has had multiple sexual partners. Experts also agree that one of the most important things women can do to reduce their risk of cervical cancer is to receive regular screening with a Pap test.

http://www.nccc-online.org/awareness.html