

# Women's Health Update



## A Cervical Cancer Survivor's Story



(NAPSA)—As someone who is proactive about taking care of her health, the last thing Quita Gibson expected was to be diagnosed with cervical cancer on her 30th birthday. She was even more surprised to learn that the main cause of cervical cancer, which is estimated to affect approximately 12,000 women in the U.S. this year, is the human papillomavirus (HPV), a virus she knew almost nothing about. Many women like Quita might not consider themselves at risk for HPV, but it is the most common sexually transmitted disease, and many people who are infected do not even know they have it.

Quita was in school to become a nurse when she learned she had cervical cancer, and unfortunately she had to put her schooling on hold due to her treatment. But because she was diligent about getting regular screenings, her doctors were able to detect the disease.

"I was devastated when my doctor shared the diagnosis with me," she says. "I had never even heard of HPV, and I was confused

about how this could have happened to me. But I was able to treat, and beat, the disease."

There are more than 100 different types of HPV, and more than 40 types that can infect the genital areas of women and men. It is so common that about 75 percent of sexually active people will get HPV sometime in their life. HPV can be passed on through any form of genital contact, and because many people who are infected don't know they have HPV, they sometimes do not realize they are passing it on.

Most HPV infections occur without any symptoms and go away without treatment. However, HPV infection sometimes persists. There is no way to know which HPV will eventually develop into cancer, and when found and treated early, cervical cancer is highly curable.

Quita is now healthy after receiving treatment and wants to get people talking about HPV and cervical cancer so other women do not have to go through what she

did. She wants people to be aware of HPV, and encourages all women to educate themselves about the risks of HPV and cervical cancer. "The whole ordeal would have been easier if I had a better understanding of the facts."

Dr. Mark H. Einstein, chair of the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation Cervical Cancer Collaborative and associate professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Montefiore Medical Center, agrees. "All women should make a habit of getting screened regularly and talking to their health care professionals about how to help protect themselves against HPV and cervical cancer."

For more information on HPV and cervical cancer, visit the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation at [www.thegcf.org](http://www.thegcf.org) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

For more information and more HPV stories, visit [thegcf.org](http://thegcf.org). This is a release from the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation with support from Merck.