



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Diagnostic Testing: A Safe Bet, Decade by Decade

(NAPSA)—While more American women are informed about their personal health than ever before, there are still many who aren't even aware of the need for basic diagnostic testing. As women mature, from young girls to women, and from mothers to grandmothers, their risk for certain medical conditions increases. Proactive testing—in the form of pelvic exams, Pap tests, and certain blood tests—can help physicians more quickly and easily identify key healthcare concerns along the way, and even identify diseases with few or no warning signs.

“Women need to be responsible for their own health,” observes Joyce Schwartz, M.D., Chief Laboratory Officer for Quest Diagnostics, a leading provider of diagnostic testing, information and services. “From teens to seniors, it is important for women to practice ‘safe health’ and take advantage of routine screenings that can help them live longer, healthier lives.”

Case in point: Since 1955, the number of cervical cancer deaths in the United States has declined by 74 percent, due primarily to the increased use of the Pap test. The rate continues to decline by about 2 percent a year.

In addition to listening to your body, eating well, and avoiding high-risk behaviors such as smoking, proactive screening should be an important part of every woman's healthcare regimen. Ask your doctor about available and age appropriate tests for you:

- **Mid-teens to early 20s:** Testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). There are more than 15 million new cases of STDs annually, with two-thirds occurring in people younger than 25. A staggering 75 percent of women that have a chlamydia infection don't know it, as there are no noticeable symptoms. Without treatment, up to 40 percent of



Regular checkups are important for maintaining health.

women with a chlamydia infection will suffer Pelvic Inflammatory Disease and potential infertility.

- **20s, 30s and 40s:** Screening for cancers, prenatal screenings and genetic testing. Detected early in their development, diseases such as cervical cancer are more treatable. Prenatal screening can provide important information to your physician to help you deliver a healthy baby. Other tests can help your physician determine if your baby is at greater risk for certain genetic disorders.

- **50s, 60s and 70s:** Screening for cardiovascular disease, colorectal cancer, osteoporosis and thyroid disease. Women past menopause should be tested regularly for cardiovascular disease, which kills twice as many women each year as all forms of cancer combined, and osteoporosis, a weakening of the bones associated with hormonal changes in aging women. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S. In its earliest stages, colorectal cancer is one of the most curable cancers.

Whether you've just become sexually active, are planning to start a family, or are facing menopause, you can take responsibility for your health every step of the way. For more health information, visit www.questdiagnostics.com/library.