



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Screening Still Critical Despite Introduction Of First HPV Vaccine For Cervical Cancer

(NAPSA)—The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved a new vaccine that can help prevent cervical cancer, and news of its arrival has been carried by practically every newspaper and TV station nationwide. But if you think the vaccine means screening with the Pap and HPV tests is no longer needed, think again.

“Ongoing screening with the Pap and—for women 30 and older—the HPV test will always be a critical part of cervical cancer prevention for women, with or without the vaccine,” says physician and patient-empowerment expert Dr. Marie Savard.

HPV vaccine—a tool, not a solution

Cervical cancer is caused by HPV (the human papillomavirus), and it's estimated that 80 percent of sexually active women will be exposed to HPV at some point in their lives, though most won't realize it because their bodies fight it off or suppress it before the virus causes any problems.

The new HPV vaccine protects against two of about a dozen types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer. And while these two types account for more than 70 percent of cervical cancer cases, continued screening is needed to protect women against the remaining high-risk HPV types.

For mature women—those who are already sexually active and thus likely to have been exposed to the targeted types of HPV—current data do not show any substantial benefit from the vaccine. So for them, regular screening remains their best weapon against cervical cancer.

HPV test is essential for accuracy and reassurance

While use of the Pap test has significantly reduced the incidence of cervical cancer, it's not



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foolproof. In fact, studies show nearly one-third of all cervical cancer cases result from Pap-detection failure.

But now, women have a second screening option—the HPV test. Whereas the Pap relies on a technician looking at cells through a microscope for signs of abnormalities, the HPV test uses advanced technology to directly detect the presence of the virus that causes cervical cancer. The HPV test is recommended for use along with the Pap in women 30 and older (those most at risk for cervical cancer). All women have to do is ask for it. The combination of the Pap and HPV tests increases the ability to detect women at risk—before cancer develops—to nearly 100 percent.

“With the right tools, used for the right women, we can eliminate cervical cancer,” says Dr. Savard. “But to make sure that happens, women need to be empowered and informed about which tests they need to request. Women 30 and older need to ask their doctor for an HPV test with their next Pap.”

For more information about cervical cancer and HPV screening, visit www.TheHPVTest.com.