



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Women's Cancer: What You Need To Know

(NAPSA)—Two years ago, a trip to the gynecologist was just another doctor's visit for Jodi McKinney, a New Jersey wife and mother of five. Little did she know that a new test for human papillomavirus (HPV) along with her Pap smear would help save her life from cervical cancer.

While McKinney's Pap smear turned out to be normal, a positive HPV test result alerted her doctor to look more closely. Further examination revealed abnormal, precancerous cells, which required an extra procedure to remove. "Had my doctor not tested me for HPV—the virus that causes cervical cancer—when she did, I may have developed full-blown cancer," McKinney recalls.

The American Cancer Society estimates that 11,000 women in the U.S. are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year. This type of cancer is virtually 100 percent preventable because HPV is its known cause. Screening technologies today such as Pap and HPV testing allow for early detection, while vaccines for young girls and women can prevent future infections.

There are more than 100 different types of HPV, most of which have no ill effect, and approximately a dozen "high-risk" forms of HPV that are associated with cervical cancer. An estimated 80 percent of women will get some form of HPV at some point in

Helpful Tips for Preventing Cervical Cancer

- Educate yourself about cervical cancer and HPV at www.theHPVtest.com.
- Make annual health visits and routine Pap tests a lifelong habit.
- If you're 30 or older, ask for the HPV test with your next Pap. When combined with the Pap, the HPV test can help your doctor monitor you more closely and catch cervical disease or cancer at an earlier stage.



their lives, but the virus usually goes away on its own. However, for reasons not fully understood, in some women HPV infections do not clear and persist over long periods of time, causing abnormal cells that eventually develop into cervical cancer.

How women can prevent cervical cancer for themselves, their families and communities

"Cervical cancer often does not have any symptoms, which is why it's essential for all women to routinely see their health care provider for screening," says Dr. Hilda Hutcherson, New York City gynecologist, author and speaker.

A Pap smear looks for abnormal or precancerous cells caused by HPV, while the HPV test can detect the presence of high-risk, cancer-causing strains of the virus itself—helping doctors identify

women most at risk for developing cervical cancer and enabling appropriate monitoring and follow-up. Women 30 and older, the age group most at risk for cervical cancer, can get both tests during their routine pelvic exams. The *digene* HPV Test is the first FDA-approved test for high-risk types of HPV.

"The HPV test can be performed on the same sample of cells collected for the Pap test and can be key to ruling out cervical cancer. Doctors can monitor women who test positive for high-risk HPV more closely and ensure that any cervical disease and precancer are detected early and treated before cancer can develop," explains Dr. Hutcherson. "The HPV test is not always given automatically as a part of primary screening for women 30 and over, so it's important to ask for the test."

Experts say that cervical cancer is preventable when women learn about HPV and get the proper screenings. Dr. Hutcherson says, "Every woman is at risk or knows women at risk. Education about the cause, risks and prevention of cervical cancer is your best defense. Take charge of your health and learn what you can do for yourself and your communities to prevent cervical and other gynecologic cancers."

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



Editor's Note: September is Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month, but this story can be used anytime.