

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 22, 2019

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A PAP TEST AND A VACCINE MAY SAVE YOUR LIFE

January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The start of a new year is a great time to reflect on your health! The Tennessee Department of Health urges women to contact their health care provider or local health department to ask about routine screening for cervical cancer, a silent killer that strikes without symptoms or pain. Cervical cancer can be prevented with recommended vaccination and regular screenings.

“Cervical cancer is almost 100 percent preventable through routine Pap screenings, living tobacco free and receiving the recommended human papillomavirus vaccination,” said TDH Director of Reproductive and Women’s Health Kelly Luskin, MSN, WHNP-BC. “Women between 21 and 65 years of age should get periodic screening for cervical cancer and talk with their health care providers about ways to prevent and reduce the risk of cervical cancer.”

In 2015, there were 288 new cases of cervical cancer diagnosed in Tennessee, and 112 women died of the disease. Human papillomavirus, or HPV is a common infection and is the single greatest risk for cervical cancer and some cancers of the mouth, throat and pharynx. Approximately 79 million Americans currently have HPV, but most don’t know they are infected. The virus is so common that more than half of all sexually active people will be infected by one or more strains of HPV in their lifetime.

A Vaccine to Prevent Cancer

The HPV vaccine can prevent infection with the HPV virus and prevent cervical cancer. HPV vaccination is provided as a two- or three-dose series. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends vaccination for both males and females between the ages of 11 and 12. However, the vaccination can be given from age nine to 26 in both males and females.

The HPV vaccination is very safe and highly effective, and is available from many health care providers and at your local health department. Parents and young adults can find information to better understand the benefits of getting vaccinated and learn about cervical cancer and HPV-related cancers at www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical/index.htm.

Screening and Testing for Women

Vaccination, screening and early diagnosis are the best ways to prevent cervical cancer. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends a Pap smear screening for cervical cancer and testing for HPV every three years for women ages 21 through 65, which can be lengthened to every five years with HPV testing for women who wish to be screened less frequently.

The **Tennessee Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program** provides screening and diagnostic testing to qualified uninsured and underinsured Tennessee women. For more information on the TBCSP including eligibility requirements, call 615-532-8383, visit www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/fhw/mch-cancer.html or contact [your local health department](#).

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This news release can be accessed online at www.tn.gov/health/news.html.