

## Cervical Health Awareness Month

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month, and **the Bloomfield Department of Health and Human Services** wants you to know that there's a lot you can do to prevent cervical cancer. Each year, more than 13,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer, according to the National Cervical Cancer Coalition.

HPV (human papillomavirus) is a very common infection that spreads through sexual activity. It causes almost all cases of cervical cancer. Nearly 80 million Americans currently have HPV, but many of them don't know they are infected.

### **What is cervical cancer?**

Cervical cancer is cancer of the cervix, which is the low, narrow part of the uterus that connects the uterus to the vagina.

Abnormal cells in the cervix can turn into cancer if they aren't found and treated. Cervical cancer is most commonly found in women who don't get regular screenings.

### **What causes cervical cancer?**

Almost all cases of cervical cancer are caused by certain types of HPV. Some types of HPV cause genital warts, and others cause cancer. HPV is the most common infection spread through sex (vaginal, anal and oral). In most cases, HPV infections go away on their own. But when they last for a long time, they can cause cancer. [Get more information on HPV infection.](#)

### The good news?

- The HPV vaccine (shot) can prevent HPV.
- Cervical cancer can often be prevented with regular screening tests and follow-up care.

In honor of National Cervical Health Awareness Month, **the Bloomfield Department of Health and Human Services** encourages:

- Women to start getting regular cervical cancer screenings at age 21
- Parents to make sure preteens get the HPV vaccine at age 11 or 12

- Teens and young adults also need to get the HPV vaccine if they didn't get it as preteens. Women up to age 26 and men up to age 21 can still get the vaccine.

### **How often should I get screened (tested)?**

How often you need to get screened depends on how old you are and which screening tests you get.

If you are age 21 to 29, get screened with a Pap test every 3 years.

If you are age 30 to 65, you have 3 options:

- Get screened every three years with a Pap test
- Get screened every five years with an HPV test.
- Get screened every five years with both a Pap test and an HPV test.

Talk with your doctor about which option is right for you. Some women may need to get screened more often. For example, your doctor may recommend that you get screened more often if you've had abnormal test results in the past.

If you are aged 66 or older, ask your doctor if you need to continue getting screened for cervical cancer.

### **IMPORTANT NEWS**

**Thanks to the health care reform law, you and your family members may be able to get these services at no cost to you. Check with your insurance company to learn more.**

### **FREE SCREENINGS**

**Taking small steps can help keep you safe and healthy.**

**FREE Pap Smear & Mammography Screening or FREE Clinical Breast Exam** on Thursday, March 7, 2019, and Thursday, October 10, 2019. Contact Bloomfield Public Health Nursing Office to register – 973-680-4058 or for additional information. (See attached flyer.)

**FREE Screenings** (including diagnostic mammograms) and biopsies for women of color between the ages of 40 and 59. Contact Clara Maass Medical Center at 973-450-2045. (See attached flyer.)

[Learn more about cervical cancer and screening:](#)

- [Cervical Cancer \[PDF - 897 KB\]](#)
- [Understanding Cervical Changes: Next Steps After an Abnormal Screening Test](#)
- [Cervical Cancer Screening](#)
- [The National Cervical Cancer Coalition](#) — Cervical Health Awareness Month Sponsor
- [Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\)](#)