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FLORIDA HEALTH IN INDIAN RIVER COUNTY RECOGNIZES CERVICAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



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Vero Beach Fla.— The Florida Department of Health in Indian River County recognizes January as Cervical Health Awareness Month, a time to educate, encourage and empower women to visit their health care provider for information and screening for cervical cancer.

“Cervical cancer, if found early through an annual PAP smear, is highly treatable. We encourage women to see their health care provider for their annual screening”, said Miranda Hawker, DOH-Indian River County Administrator.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), approximately 12,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year. In Florida, there were 914 new cases and 345 deaths from cervical cancer in 2013 (Florida Cancer Data System). Most cervical cancer cases occur in women who have never been screened with a Pap test or have not been screened in the past five years.

Since the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine was introduced in 2006, CDC reports there has been a 64 percent reduction in vaccine-type HPV infections among teen girls in the United States. Studies have shown that fewer teens are getting genital warts and cervical pre-cancers are decreasing. Nearly all cervical cancers are caused by HPV. HPV is a common skin virus that is passed from one person to another during sexual activity. The HPV vaccination series can help prevent multiple cancers, including cervical cancer and cancer of the head, mouth, neck and throat.

The Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices recommends vaccinating boys and girls ages 11 to 12 years old. The HPV vaccine may be given starting at 9 years of age and through the age of 26 for those who did not get any or all of the shots when they were younger. DOH-Indian River offers the HPV vaccine at the Gifford Health Center in Gifford.

Talk to your medical provider about when a Pap test is most appropriate for you. Tests for specific HPV strains can support earlier diagnosis of cervical cancer. When found early, it is highly treatable.

According to CDC, follow these tips to reduce your risk or prevent cervical cancer:

- Get the HPV vaccine;
- See your doctor regularly for a Pap test if you are a woman between the ages of 21 and 65;
- Do not smoke; and
- Limit your number of sexual partners.

The DOH Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program is available statewide. This program provides Pap tests and mammograms to women ages 50-64, who are uninsured and are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. For more information and to see if you qualify, please contact DOH-Indian River at 772-794-7400.

About the Florida Department of Health

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