



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

ADPH offers cervical cancer screening and treatment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Natasha Ptomey
(334) 206-7066
nptomey@adph.state.al.us

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month, a time to emphasize the importance of screening for cervical cancer to women in Alabama. The Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program of the Alabama Department of Public Health is pleased to promote this program and to provide cervical cancer screening services throughout the year in Alabama.

"Screening for cervical cancer is important to women because it can help find pre-cancerous changes in the cervix which can be removed, thereby greatly reducing the chance of the woman dying from this disease," said Dr. Jack Hataway, director of the Chronic Disease Prevention Division. "It can also detect cervical cancer in early stages which increases the chance of a woman obtaining treatment to help her survive having cervical cancer."

The program offers free pelvic exams and pap smears and free clinical breast exams to women ages 40 to 64 who do not have any insurance or who are underinsured and who meet the income eligibility guidelines. Women ages 50 to 64 will receive free mammograms in addition to the services mentioned above. For more information, please call toll-free at 1-877-252-3324.

The American Cancer Society estimates that at least 13,000 women in the U.S., including 200 in Alabama, will be diagnosed with cervical cancer and nearly 4,100 will die of this disease. Being a middle-aged woman is one risk factor for developing cervical cancer although it can affect younger women.

Another risk factor is human papilloma virus infection, which is a disease transmitted through sexual contact. Human papilloma virus infection, which sometimes results in genital warts on the cervix or vagina, is a major risk factor for cervical cancer.

Smoking increases a woman's risk of cervical cancer two times that of nonsmokers. Diets low in fruits and vegetables may increase cervical cancer risk as well as the risk of other cancers. Also, a family history of cervical cancer may increase a woman's risk.

The following are the American Cancer Society recommendations for cervical cancer screening:

Cervical cancer screening should begin about three years after a woman begins having vaginal intercourse, but no later than 21 years of age.

Cervical screening should be done every year with regular Pap tests. At or after age 30, women who have had three normal test results in a row may get screened every two to three years. A doctor may suggest getting the test more often if a woman has certain risk factors such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection or a weakened immune system.

Women 70 years of age and older who have had three or more normal Pap test results and no abnormal results in the last 10 years may choose to stop cervical cancer screening.

Screening after a total hysterectomy (with removal of the cervix) is usually not necessary unless the surgery was done as a treatment for cervical cancer or pre-cancer. Some other special conditions may require continued screening. Women who have had a hysterectomy without removal of the cervix should continue cervical cancer screening at least until age 70.

1/6/03