



Cook County
Department of Public Health
Cook County Bureau of Health Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 10, 2008

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Cervical Cancer Screenings Available to all Uninsured Women

Each year, nearly 10,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer, with 3,500 deaths reported annually. Cervical cancer in most cases is caused by Human Papillomavirus, or HPV, a virus that is transmitted during sexual activity.

Uninsured women in Illinois, regardless of income, can receive free pelvic exams and Pap tests along with mammography and breast exams, through the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP). To enroll in the IBCCP program, women should phone the Illinois Department of Public Health's toll-free Women's Health-Line at **888-522-1282**. If a woman is diagnosed with a cancerous condition, she will qualify for comprehensive healthcare coverage provided by Healthcare and Family Services (HFS). Women who have a precancerous cervical cancer condition in need of follow up diagnostic tests will also qualify for HFS coverage to determine whether they actually have breast or cervical cancer. Healthcare coverage will include doctor visits, inpatient and outpatient hospital care, emergency services, prescription drugs and more.

"We encourage women to take advantage of this program as a means to prevent needless suffering as well as provide peace of mind through early detection," said Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D, M.P.H., chief operating officer of the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH). "January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month and it's a perfect time to remind women who are uninsured that vital health services are available. They just need to call."

Cervical cancer begins in the cervix, the part of the uterus or womb that opens to the vagina. Before doctors started using the Pap test in the 1950s, cervical cancer was the leading cause of death from cancer in women.

According to the National Cervical Cancer Awareness Campaign, Hispanic women have twice the rate of cervical cancer compared to non-Hispanic white women. African-American women develop this cancer about 50 per cent more than non-Hispanic white women. These disparities are due, in part, from difficulties in gaining access to health care. The women who are most at risk for the disease are women who do not have regular check-ups that include Pap tests.

In suburban Cook County, CCDPH is the lead agency for IBCCP. Case Managers will assist women to make appointments and fill out paperwork.

CCDPH also provides family planning services that include pelvic exams and Pap tests. Under the Vaccines for Children Program, females between 9 and 18 years may also receive the new HPV vaccine which protects against the two most common viruses that are associated with cervical cancer. (Certain forms of cervical cancer cannot be prevented through vaccination). The vaccine is given in three separate doses and should be given before a female becomes sexually active. The HPV vaccine is not a curative for cervical cancer.

For information contact the Cook County Department of Public Health at 708-492-2000, the Women's Health-Line at 888-522-1282, or visit www.cancerscreening.illinois.gov/.

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