

**Newsletter article- January 2008-  
January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month**

Cervical cancer, once a deadly disease that few women survived now accounts for less than two (2) percent of the cancers in Kansas women. Screening using the Pap test and early treatment accounts for this dramatic decrease during the last 60 years. Screening is easy and painless and takes very little time out of a woman's day.

There were 553 new cases of cervical cancer reported in Kansas women from 2000 to 2004. About 35 percent of those cases occurred in women age 55 and older. Cervical cancer can now be prevented from developing with a series of vaccines for young girls, which just began available in the U.S in the last year. This vaccine targets the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is present in more than 99 percent of cervical cancer cases.

Here is what you need to know:

- Cervical cancer is very slow growing, so regular screening can detect abnormal changes in cells early when it is most treatable.
- The Center's for Disease Control recommends women begin having a Pap test at age 21 or three years following the onset of sexual activity.
- Several factors increase the risk of developing cervical cancer including a history of multiple sex partners, having a partner who has had multiple sex partners or having had sexual intercourse prior to age 16.
- HPV is a sexually transmitted virus and it is estimated that 3 out of 4 people who become infected with HPV have no symptoms.

Every woman is at risk for developing cervical cancer and the risks increase with age. In Kansas 84 percent of women age 18 and older had received a Pap test within the past three years, according to the Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance Survey conducted by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. The highest percentage was among African-American women (87 percent) and the lowest among women who claim more

than one race (79 percent). Increased screening followed by appropriate medical treatment for these population groups could lower the rate of invasive cervical cancer.

More information about cervical cancer and screening can be found at:

[http://www.cancerkansas.org/cancer\\_links.htm](http://www.cancerkansas.org/cancer_links.htm)