



## NEWS RELEASE

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## January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A new year brings a fresh start, a time of promises and commitments to take better care of ourselves. January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. When considering which resolutions to make, the Alabama Department of Public Health wants every woman to consider the following factors that may increase her risk of developing cervical cancer.

**Human Papillomavirus (HPV):** This is the most important risk factor for cervical cancer. HPV is a sexually transmitted disease that can cause changes in the cervix. The changes can be detected through a simple Pap test. There are no symptoms associated with HPV and most people never know they have it. At this time there is no treatment available for HPV.

**Smoking:** Women who smoke are twice as likely as those who do not to develop cervical cancer. Tobacco smoke produces chemicals that may damage the DNA in cells of the cervix and make cancer more likely to occur.

**Family History:** Recent studies suggest that women whose mother or sister had cervical cancer are more likely to develop the disease themselves.

Most cervical cancer can be prevented by following the American Cancer Society guidelines: young women should delay initiation of sexual activity until they are older. Women of all ages can protect themselves from HPV by having few sexual partners and not having sex with people who have had many partners.

Secondly, women ages 18 and older should begin having an annual Pap test. The Pap test is able to detect HPV infection and pre-cancers. Treatment of these problems can stop cervical cancer before it develops into an invasive cancer.

For additional information about cervical cancer please call one of the following toll-free numbers:

1-800-ACS-2345 American Cancer Society

1-800-4-CANCER National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

1/4/05