



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Cervical cancer survivor urges regular checkups

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Felicia Vanderleest of Shelby County was diagnosed with cervical cancer in April 2004. She had not had a Pap smear in two years and just went in for a routine checkup at the Shelby County Health Department.

Ms. Vanderleest recommends "going for your regular checkup. Women are not aware of what you have to deal with if you have cervical problems. It's so easy to get a Pap smear and women need to go every year!" Ms. Vanderleest had a total hysterectomy and said she is "doing great" after her treatments.

Often there are no signs or symptoms of cervical cancer. Routine Pap testing can detect changes in the cervix that may be a precancerous condition. When cervical cancer is detected early, the five-year survival rate is 92 percent. Symptoms usually appear when the cancer is further along. Women should report any of the following to a health care professional right away:

- any unusual discharge from the vagina (not your normal period)
- blood spots or light bleeding other than your normal period
- bleeding or pain during sex

These symptoms do not mean that a woman has cervical cancer, because they could be caused by another condition. A Pap test is recommended for any woman with the preceding symptoms to identify the cause.

The American Cancer Society recommends that all women should initiate cervical cancer screening about three years after she begins having vaginal intercourse, but no later than 21 years of age.

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

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