



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

Pap tests save lives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Haley Justice
(334) 206-7066

Cervical cancer was once the leading cause of cancer-related deaths for women. Since 1955, the number of deaths from this cancer has declined significantly. Routine screening through a procedure called a Pap test allows doctors to detect precancerous cells before cervical cancer develops.

Cervical cancer can be prevented with routine screening and cured if found and treated early. The five-year survival rate for cervical cancer that is detected at an early or localized stage is 92 percent. There may be no signs or symptoms present, therefore, it is important to have regular medical examinations.

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

Cervical cancer screening should begin about three years after a woman initiates 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 or 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 or older who have had three or more normal Pap tests results and no abnormal results in the past 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 the removal of the cervix should continue cervical cancer screening at least until age 70.

The American Cancer Society estimates that at least 13,000 women in the United States and 200 women in Alabama will be diagnosed with cervical cancer each year. Although the rates of developing this disease have decreased over the years, African American and Hispanic women continue to be diagnosed with cervical cancer at a higher rate than Caucasian women.

Between 1999 and 2002, 302 Alabama women died from cervical cancer. Women who are properly screened should not die from cervical cancer. Routine Pap testing is not only the best way to reduce deaths from cervical cancer by detecting cancer in its earlier and most treatable stage, but can also reduce incidence by identifying pre-cancerous conditions that are treatable.

For other information about cervical cancer 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 System

1/25/05