

Women's Health **UPDATE**

Take Time To Learn The Facts About Cervical Cancer

(NAPSA)—You can help protect yourself against cervical cancer, a disease caused by certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV). What is HPV? Many women don't know and, until diagnosed with HPV at age 26, MaryBeth Hammer was one of them. MaryBeth, founder of Concerts for a Cure, a nonprofit aimed at raising awareness about HPV through annual benefit concerts, was not expecting to be one of the many victims of HPV. "I was completely shocked when I found out I had HPV," she recalls. "I felt overwhelmed, because I knew nothing about HPV other than my doctor telling me that certain types of HPV can cause cervical cancer and other diseases."

I never thought it would happen to me

Like many women, MaryBeth never thought she would get HPV, but she was diagnosed after having an abnormal Pap test. Her infection had progressed to early precancerous stages, but was caught in time before turning into cancer. "I am lucky that my disease was caught early and hope my story inspires others to get educated," says MaryBeth. "All women should learn about HPV, so they can help protect themselves and avoid getting the same diagnosis."

80 percent of women will get HPV

There are more than 100 different types of HPV, 30 to 40 of which infect the genital areas of women and men. An estimated eight out of 10 women will get infected with HPV in their lifetime—that's 80 percent. For most, the infection will clear on its own. But for others who don't clear certain types of HPV, cervical cancer can develop if not diagnosed and treated early.

Anyone can get— and spread—HPV

HPV is easily spread. Women need to know that they can get HPV not just through sexual intercourse, but also through any type of genital contact with an infected person. Even though condoms may lower the chances of getting HPV, they do not offer 100 percent protection. And because HPV often shows no signs or symptoms, it can be passed on to a partner without even knowing it.

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**—MaryBeth Hammer,
founder of
Concerts for a Cure**



The importance of screening

Approximately 30 women a day in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer. Because of the availability of cervical cancer screening, cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers. After receiving treatment, MaryBeth's health care professional considers her healthy, and she is back to regular screenings. "It's important that you educate yourself, talk to your health care professional about HPV and get screened," MaryBeth stresses. "I'm living proof!" Dr. Lisa Flowers, assistant professor of gynecology and obstetrics at the Emory University School of Medicine, concurs. "By getting screening regularly and understanding the facts about HPV, you can help protect yourself against cervical cancer. And who wouldn't want to do that?"

For more information on HPV and related diseases, you can visit www.cdc.gov.