



# Health Awareness

## Screening Makes A Difference For Cancer Prevention

(NAPSA)—American women can now screen for—and help prevent—the human papillomavirus (HPV). That's fortunate, as new data released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that 25,000 annual cases of cancer were attributed to HPV.

“Cervical cancer, the most common HPV-related cancer to affect women worldwide, is 100 percent preventable with routine screening,” says internist, author and speaker Dr. Marie Savard.

Certain types of HPV are responsible for causing abnormal cervical cells to develop, which can eventually turn into cancer. A new HPV vaccine can effectively prevent infection with two of the cancer-causing types of the virus in girls and young women, but continued screening with a Pap and—for women age 30 plus—the HPV test is important as well.

“Two screening tests performed at well-woman appointments—the Pap smear and the HPV test—can significantly decrease the risk of cervical disease or cancer,” explains Dr. Savard. “That’s because the vaccine only offers partial protection. Women can empower themselves by knowing the medical guidelines and what screening tests are right for them.”

### All Women Need Pap Smears But The HPV Test Helps Those Most At Risk

An estimated 80 percent of sexually active women will get HPV at some point in their lives, but the good news is that infections usually clear up on their own. Doctors encourage all women to get annual Pap smears to check for abnormal

cells caused by persistent HPV infections.

However, experts recommend that women 30 and older—who are most likely to develop cervical cancer—also get the HPV test, which can be done on the same sample of cells used for a Pap and is covered by most insurance plans. Only one HPV test—the *digene* HPV Test—is currently FDA approved to detect the presence of high-risk types of the virus. This newer test can help doctors and nurses identify and keep a closer eye on women who are at greatest risk for cervical disease.

Dr. Savard explains that the Pap alone may not be enough to protect older women, since studies have shown that it fails to identify women with precancerous cells 15 to 50 percent of the time. Screening accuracy increases to nearly 100 percent by combining both tests for women 30 and older.

“If you’re over 30, it’s essential that you talk with your doctor or nurse about combined screening with the Pap and HPV test. Now is the perfect time to take charge of your own health and remind other women in your life that we can prevent cervical cancer,” says Dr. Savard.

Visit [www.theHPVtest.com](http://www.theHPVtest.com) for more information.

### Helpful Tips For Getting The HPV Test

Since not all doctors and nurses automatically order the HPV test with a Pap smear in women 30 and older, you may need to ask for it.

- Educate yourself about cervical cancer, HPV and the HPV test by visiting [www.theHPVtest.com](http://www.theHPVtest.com).
- Before your next exam, find out if the HPV test is covered by your insurance plan, then ask your doctor’s office if you can get the test as part of your routine screening—no matter what your Pap result.
- If your doctor or nurse says the office does not order HPV testing for all its female patients 30 and older, you can respond that you’d like them to make an exception for you—for your extra peace of mind.



**Note to Editors:** January is Cervical Cancer Screening Month but this story can be used at any time.