

# Women's Health **UPDATE**

## Know Your Family's Health And Prescription History

(NAPSA)—Sally Keely was 11 years old when she and her mother had a life-changing conversation. Sally's mother revealed information about her own medication and health record that could affect Sally's personal health.

In 1962, Sally's mother was prescribed diethylstilbestrol (DES) while she was pregnant. Like many women during that time, Sally's mother was advised that the drug would reduce her chances of miscarrying. Thirty-three years after the drug's introduction, the FDA issued a bulletin advising physicians to stop prescribing DES to pregnant women because it posed significant health risks for both the women and their unborn children.

"Now, I understand the importance of compiling comprehensive health histories for my daughter, who could possibly experience health effects as a 'third generation' DES daughter," Sally said.

Sally discovered DES Action USA, an advocacy organization specifically developed for people who were exposed to DES. And she obtained new information through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) DES Update ([www.cdc.gov/DES](http://www.cdc.gov/DES)), which provided the most current scientific research on DES health risks.

Candy Tedeschi, R.N.C., O.G.N.P., explains that DES exposure is just one of several details individuals should obtain about their family's health history, including information on infectious and genetic diseases, surgeries, health habits and information on ages and causes of death.

### About DES

According to CDC, U.S. doctors prescribed DES to an estimated



**Women can begin the process of compiling their health history by researching online health records and resources such as the CDC's online DES Self-Assessment.**

five million pregnant women between 1938 and 1971 as a method for preventing miscarriage. Beginning in 1953, researchers began linking DES exposure to clear cell adenocarcinoma, a rare cancer of the cervix and vagina, among teenage girls—an unprecedented link for a disease that was most often detected in older women. Over the following 20 years, researchers continued to uncover potential DES-related health effects. In 1971, the FDA issued a Drug Bulletin advising physicians to stop prescribing DES to pregnant women.

CDC spent three years compiling more than 30 years of research and developing a public education campaign, including a Web site—[www.cdc.gov/DES](http://www.cdc.gov/DES)—to provide the newest information and practical resources for the public and health care providers. CDC also includes updated research information on other unconfirmed health risks as well as tools to help individuals assess their own risk of exposure.