



Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Preventing cervical cancer

Did you know that regular Pap tests and follow-up care can prevent about 90 per cent of cervical cancer cases? A Pap test checks the cervix for any abnormal cells that can lead to cervical cancer. When needed, these abnormal cells can be treated or carefully followed.

Almost all cases of cervical cancer are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV infections are common and usually do not cause symptoms, so most people do not even know they have it. Even if you've been immunized for HPV, it's recommended you start having Pap tests at age 25 years, or three years after becoming sexually active, whichever is later.

Pap tests are quick and can be done at your healthcare provider's office or at a women's health clinic. Regular screening means any abnormal changes can be followed closely to make sure they clear up or are treated. It's important to attend any appointments for follow-up testing if recommended by your healthcare provider. The earlier abnormal changes are found, the easier they are to manage and the less likely they are to develop into cancer.

For those who are unsure of when they had their last Pap Test, or are due for another, please contact your physician or call Health Link at 811.

In addition to regular Pap tests, HPV immunization is an important tool in preventing HPV-related diseases. The HPV vaccine is offered to all Grade 6 students in Alberta schools who haven't had HPV vaccine yet and works best in children and teens before they have any type of sexual contact. Some adults may also benefit from the HPV vaccine. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to find out if it's a good idea for you.

For more information on cervical cancer screening, visit screeningforlife.ca.