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JANUARY IS CERVICAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

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Sanford, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health in Seminole County (DOH-Seminole) reminds female residents to protect themselves from cervical cancer with a screening test. Cervical cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov), each year, 12,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer and 4,000 women die from it.

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month, an important time to highlight issues related to cervical cancer, Human Papillomavirus (HPV) disease and the significance of early detection. "Vaccinate early, Pap test regularly, and HPV test when recommended" is the theme for this year's awareness month, sponsored by the National Cervical Cancer Coalition. The theme highlights the important role of regular screening tests.

All women are at risk for cervical cancer. It occurs most often in women over age 30. HPV is the main cause of cervical cancer. HPV is a common virus that is passed from one person to another during sexual intercourse. At least half of sexually active people will have HPV at some point in their lives, but few women will get cervical cancer.

"Cervical cancer is highly preventable in most Western countries because screening tests and a vaccine to prevent HPV infections are available," said Dr. Swannie Jett, Health Officer for DOH-Seminole. "When cervical cancer is found early, it is highly treatable and associated with long survival and good quality of life."

Early on, cervical cancer may not cause signs and symptoms. Advanced cervical cancer may cause bleeding or discharge from the vagina that is not normal, such as bleeding after sexual intercourse. If you have any of these signs, see your doctor. Risk factors associated with cervical cancer include multiple sex partners, unprotected sex, and smoking.

According to [Florida Charts](http://www.floridacharts.com), a total of 291 incidence of cervical cancer were reported from 2010 through 2012 in Seminole, Orange and Lake Counties. In 2003, Seminole County's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (BCCEDP) was implemented to serve women 50 to 64 years of age who are uninsured Florida residents in Seminole, Orange and Lake Counties. To obtain more information about BCCEDP, contact Lahoma McNeil at 407-665-3244 or Lahoma.McNeil@flhealth.gov.

For more information about cervical cancer, visit the National Cervical Cancer Coalition website at www.nccc-online.org. Additional information can also be found at DOH-Seminole's website, www.seminolecohealth.com.

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