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Cervical Cancer Screening Patient Education:

The cervix is the bottom part of the uterus; it opens into the vagina. Cervical cancer happens when normal cells in the cervix change into abnormal cells and grow out of control. There are two main types of cervical cancer, "squamous cell carcinoma" and "adenocarcinoma". Screening tests can find cervical cancer and precancerous cells in the early stages when it can be treated, and thus may reduce the number of people who develop cervical cancer as well as the number of deaths due to the disease.

Who should be screened for Cervical Cancer and When?

Screening recommendations only apply to people with a cervix who have had all normal tests in the past, do not have any abnormal symptoms, and who have a normal immune system.

Age 21 to 29 — The exact age at which to begin cervical cancer screening and the preferred method to use is not completely clear, and recommendations from expert groups vary.

Age 30 to 65 — Experts recommend continuing with regular screening through age 65 for people with all normal results.

After age 65 — Most experts feel that many people can stop having cervical cancer screening after the age of 65, though it depends on their risk factors. Some clinicians, however, continue to offer screening through age 74 years for those who are healthy.

There are several types of screening tests for cervical cancer:

- The Papanicolaou or "Pap" test (sometimes called a "Pap smear")
- A human papillomavirus or "HPV" test
- A combination of both tests done together, known as "co-testing"

Cervical Cancer Test Screenings

Screening tests can be done at any time during your menstrual cycle. However, some providers may suggest scheduling your cervical cancer screening during a time when you do not expect to have your period.

Cervical cancer screening can be done using several different tests:

Pap test — The Pap test (sometimes called a "Pap smear") is a method of examining cells from the cervix. Another term for a Pap test is "cervical cytology." For a Pap test, the provider will do a pelvic examination using a device called a speculum to open the vagina. Then they will use a small brush or spatula to collect cells from the cervix.

HPV test — Like a Pap test, the human papillomavirus (HPV) test is done during a pelvic examination, using a small brush to collect a sample from the cervix.

Your healthcare provider is the best source of information for questions and concerns related to your cervical cancer screening.

To schedule an appointment please call 1-888-296-GPHA (4742)