



BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER

The Upper Peninsula Health Plan wants to give you some facts about *breast and cervical cancer*. These are two of the most common cancers women can get. Without screening tests, many women often will not know they have these diseases until they are in their advanced stages. *It is very important to have these screening tests.* Both of these cancers are almost 100% curable, if found early.

BREAST CANCER

Every woman is at some risk for getting breast cancer. Most women with breast cancer have no known risk factors at all. *All women should do monthly breast self-exams.* You will know your breasts better than anyone and can check for unusual changes.

Be sure to see your doctor for the following:

- If you find a lump, thickening, or a breast that changes shape.
- Dimpling, puckering, or retraction of the skin.
- Breast tenderness or pain that lasts most of the time.
- Nipples that become drawn into the chest, change shape, or become crusty from a discharge.
- A non-milky discharge when you squeeze the nipple of either breast.

American Cancer Society Screening Guidelines for Most Adults:

- Yearly mammogram (an X-ray of your breasts) is suggested, starting at age 40 and continuing for as long as a woman is in good health.
- Clinical breast exam about every three years for women in their 20s and 30s.
- Clinical breast exam every year for women 40 and older.
- Talk with your doctor about your history and whether you should have additional tests at an earlier age.

Currently (April 2010 report), the National Cancer Institute estimates that 1 in 8 women in the United States will develop breast cancer at some time in their life. Increase in age is the greatest known risk factor for getting breast cancer. *Early detection is the key!*



CERVICAL CANCER

Cancer of the cervix (the lower part of the uterus) can occur at any age. Cervical cancer does not form suddenly. It is a slow-growing cancer with few symptoms to let a woman know that she has it. ***If*** cervical cancer is found early enough, most women will survive this disease.

Some Increased Risks of Cervical Cancer:

- Having a history of venereal warts (human papilloma virus).
- Having had frequent sexual intercourse before age 18.
- Having unprotected sex at any age.
- Having had multiple sexual partners. The more partners, the greater the risk.
- Having sex with partners who themselves:
 - began having sexual intercourse at a young age.
 - have had many sexual partners.
 - have had sex with another woman with cervical cancer. (This is how the human papilloma virus passes from person to person.)
- Poor dietary habits.
- Smoking.
- The greatest risk: ***Have not had a Pap test*** — which might detect precancerous changes!

The *best* way to find this cancer early is to have pelvic exams with Pap tests as recommended:

- All women should start cervical cancer screening about three years after they start having vaginal intercourse, but no later than 21 years old.
- Screening should be done every year with the regular Pap test or every two years using the newer liquid-based Pap test.

Current screening recommendations for breast and cervical cancer are under review. Please talk to your doctor about your risk factors and screening recommendations.

The Upper Peninsula Health Plan urges you to schedule these routine tests. ***They are part of your benefits.***

Do not delay. You may save a life. Your own!

PREVENTION IS THE BEST MEDICINE!

These facts and recommendations are based on data from the American Cancer Society, the National Cancer Institute, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.