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CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING

The National Cervical Cancer Education Program has designated January as Cervical Cancer Screening month. Their goal is to improve screening and the early detection of cervical cancer, which will result in a major reduction in the incidence and mortality of cervical cancer among women. Every year in the United States approximately

- 15,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer
- 5,000 women die
- Worldwide, cervical cancer affects 500,000 women each year

In some parts of the world, cervical cancer is the most common cancer in women. With early and regular screening, most cases of cervical cancer can be prevented.

The National Cervical Cancer Public Education Campaign (NCCPEC), through its Web site at <http://www.cervicalcancercampaign.org>, educates women about the importance of regular Pap smear screening in the early detection of cervical cancer. The site includes information about the link between cervical cancer and one of the most common sexually transmitted infections, the human papillomavirus (HPV), also known as genital warts. For many women, an infection with HPV has no sign or symptoms and their immune system is able to control the virus. However, some women may develop precancerous cell changes and even cervical cancer. These changes can be detected with a Pap test. In addition, other tests may be available that can detect the HPV virus and inform a woman or her health care professional if she is at risk for developing cervical cancer.

If detected early, cervical cancer is a highly curable disease. In addition to early detection, American women should educate themselves about cervical cancer, the importance of regular Pap test screening, and cutting edge tests for the causes of cervical cancer. According to the NCCPEC, a recent survey indicated 70% of women were unable to name the cause of cervical cancer, and 76% had never heard of HPV. Lives can be saved with increased knowledge about the cause of cervical cancer, new and existing screening tests and improved health care treatments.

For more information regarding cervical cancer screening, Pap tests or HPV contact NCCPEC website or the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency at one of our four locations: Coldwater (517) 279-9561, Hillsdale (517) 437-7395, Sturgis (269) 659-4013, Three Rivers (269) 273-2161 or visit our website at www.bhsj.org.

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