

January is National Cervical Health Month

Considered one of the leading causes of death for women in the U.S., the National Institute of Health (NIH) now ranks cervical cancers as the 14th most diagnosed cancers among women. This leads to more than 12,000 new diagnoses each year, with one in 3 cases ending in death.

Screening for cervical cancer is an essential part of women's gynecological health.

In women aged 21-29, less than 50% are up to date with cervical cancer screenings, with screening even less likely among women 30-65, of whom only 44% are screened. Women of color are half as likely as white women to be screened.



The Gardasil 9 HPV vaccine is now approved for women from the ages 26-46, which can protect from cervical cancer.

Supporting Members In Scheduling, and Attending Pelvic Exams

Women need pelvic exams every 3 years to monitor cervical, uterine, ovarian, and other gynecological health. Once women have reached menopause, they can reduce the frequency of pelvic exams once they have received two consecutive healthy/normal results.

Women who are sexually active also should have routine STI checks, including HIV tests, in between regular pelvic exam screenings.

A normal pelvic result is a result that comes back without any cervical cell abnormalities, and without human papillomavirus (HPV), a major risk for cervical cancer.

What to Ask Your Provider:

- ◆ Are my results normal?
- ◆ Do I need a follow-up appointment?
- ◆ Do I need any additional medications, (birth control, etc.)?
- ◆ Are there any side effects of the birth control I am on?
- ◆ Should I consider Gardasil (or any of the other HPV vaccines)?
- ◆ My family has a history of cervical cancer, should I be concerned?
- ◆ Think about and write down other questions you have about your personal health.

Ensuring That Your Pelvic Exam Is a Safe Space

Many different medical providers can perform a pelvic exam.

It is important to remember that ultimately you can choose whom you feel the most comfortable with. These providers include:

- ◆ Primary Care Physicians (PCP)
- ◆ Nurse Practitioner (NP)
- ◆ Specialist, such as a gynecologist
- ◆ Nurses
- ◆ Among other licensed, health professionals

Exerting your space during your exam:

- ◆ At the beginning of your appointment, you can ask your provider what to expect from today's (or an upcoming) visit.
- ◆ List your concerns to your medical provider.
- ◆ Ask the provider to slow down, and to communicate with you before going to the next step.
- ◆ Have someone else in the room with you, if that would make you feel more comfortable.
- ◆ Ask to take breaks, or even reschedule if you need to.

After Your Exam

Thank yourself for taking care of your body, and investing in your health. Perhaps practice some mindfulness, or any other techniques you enjoy utilizing.

Follow up with your clinicians, or team if any feelings, or emotions were brought up as a result of your exam.

Follow up with your practitioner to get the results in a few days; especially if the results were abnormal.