

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

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Cervical Cancer is Both Preventable and Treatable

Taking advantage of available vaccines can help prevent cervical cancer while following expert screening recommendations can help ensure cervical cancer is treatable, according to the Wyoming Department of Health.

In 2010, 23 Wyoming women were diagnosed with cervical cancer and 11 women died of the disease.

“Over the years, medical research has let us know that human papillomavirus (HPV), a sexually transmitted disease, is associated with nearly all cases of cervical cancer and has led to vaccines that can prevent HPV,” said Dr. Wendy Braund, state health officer and Public Health Division senior administrator with the Wyoming Department of Health.

Braund said two HPV vaccines are available. Either HPV vaccine is routinely recommended for 11-or 12-year-old girls, and “quadrivalent” HPV vaccine is routinely recommended for 11-or 12-year-old boys. Vaccination is also recommended for 13- through 26-year-old females and 13-through 21-year-old males who have not completed the vaccine series.

“We also know cervical cancer is highly curable when found and treated early,” Braund said. She noted experts generally recommend Pap tests for women ages of 21 and 65 every three years or screening with a combination of Pap test and HPV testing every five years for women ages 30-65.

According to the Wyoming 2010 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 78.3 percent of Wyoming women ages 18 and older (with an intact cervix) reported having a Pap test in the past three years. The state screening rate was well below the U.S. median of 81.2 percent in 2010.

“Unfortunately, Wyoming currently ranks 45th in the nation for our Pap screening rates,” Braund said. “Our rate has shown no significant improvement since tracking began in Wyoming in 1995.”

Braund noted healthcare providers play a critical role in cervical cancer screening. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends client reminders, small media and one-on-one education as strategies to increase cervical cancer screening.

The Wyoming Department of Health’s Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, aka Women’s Health Source, provides free breast and cervical cancer screening services to low-income, uninsured Wyoming women ages 50 through 64 and to women ages 30-50 who have not had a Pap test in the past five years. Other women may also qualify. Contact the program at 1-800-264-1296 for more information.

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