

A publication of the

**PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

**Get Regular Checkups to Detect Cervical Cancer**  
**January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month**

Each year, about 15,000 women in the United States learn that they have cancer of the cervix, and of that number, over 4,000 will die from it.

The cervix is the lower, narrow part of the uterus (womb). Cells on the surface of the cervix sometimes appear abnormal but are not cancerous. Scientists believe that some abnormal changes in cells on the cervix are the first step in a series of slow changes that can lead to cancer years later.



of the risk factors are smoking, having had frequent sex partners, having sex early in life, having had many full-term pregnancies, or having a history of sexually transmitted diseases. Having a lowered immune system, such as from HIV, can also put you at higher risk. Long-term use of birth control pills can also increase the risk.

**Symptoms**

Early cervical pre-cancers or cancer often have no signs or symptoms. That's why it's important for women to have regular Pap tests. Symptoms usually appear when the cancer is further along. You should report any of the following to your doctor right away:

- ◆ Any unusual discharge from the vagina (not your normal period)
- ◆ Blood spots or light bleeding other than your normal period
- ◆ Bleeding or pain during sex

Of course, these symptoms do not mean that you have cancer. They can also be caused by something else. But, you must check with your doctor to find out. (Information provided courtesy of the American Cancer Society website. For more information about cervical cancer, go to [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).)

**Early Detection**

If all women had pelvic exams and Pap tests regularly, most pre-cancerous conditions would be detected and treated before cancer develops. That way, most invasive cancers could be prevented. Any cancer that does occur would likely be found at an early, curable stage.

The Pap test is a simple, painless test to detect abnormal cells in and around the cervix. Women should have regular checkups including a pelvic exam and a Pap test if they are or have been sexually active, or if they are age 18 or older.

Those who are at increased risk of developing cancer of the cervix should be especially careful to follow their doctor's advice about checkups. Some

**The Facts About Cervical Cancer**



- ◆ Women 18 to 64 years of age experience 60 percent of cervical cancer disease.
- ◆ Having multiple sexual partners over a lifetime contributes to the risk.
- ◆ Having a past diagnosis of human papilloma virus (HPV) is a precursor to cervical cancer.
- ◆ Having a history of sexually transmitted infections increases the risk of cervical cancer.
- ◆ Sexually active females 18 and older should have an annual gynecological examination.
- ◆ Women of color and foreign-born women have the highest risk of cervical cancer.

# Pinellas County Health Department

HEALTHY WEIGHT WEEK IS JANUARY 18—24, 2004

## Reaching and maintaining your healthy weight



Maintaining a healthy weight helps us have the best health, both physically and emotionally. For those of us who are above our ideal body weight, a weight management plan should be considered.

A weight management plan should not be looked upon as a short-term proposition. Permanent diet changes and frequent exercise should be used for long-term results.

Do not set yourself up for failure with unreasonable weight loss goals. Set realistic goals. A realistic weight loss goal should not exceed 1—2 pounds per week. This can be done most effectively by combining exercise with dieting.

Any weight loss program should be cleared by a physician to make sure that there is no medical condition that could be aggravated by a new regimen. Have your doctor or health professional figure your Body Mass Index (BMI) and use this as a guide to a healthy weight.



A sensible exercise program should include 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity a day. This does not have to be done in one 30-minute block of time. New recommendations for exercise say that a brisk walk from the far end of the parking lot to the front door of the store may be included in these 30 minutes. Make simple changes in your lifestyle. Instead of just

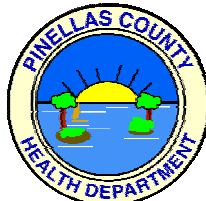
putting your dogs out in the yard, take them for a walk. It just amounts to making the effort to be more active.

### Sensible Eating

A sensible eating plan includes the following:

- ◆ Control your portion sizes — avoid all-you-can-eat dining establishments and refuse second helpings.
- ◆ Say “No” to super-sized portions and eat slowly.
- ◆ Drink at least 8 glasses of water daily.

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- ◆ Eat at least five servings a day of fruits and vegetables. Any diet plan that excludes fruits and vegetables short-changes a person on the benefits that these products can give us. Fruits and vegetables not only give us vitamins and minerals but help protect us from cancer and high blood pressure, etc.
- ◆ Control your intake of fats by avoiding fried foods, fatty meats like cold cuts and sausage, fatty sauces and gravies, and desserts like ice cream and pastries.



*There is nothing magical about any fad diet.*

Fad diets are not long-term solutions. There is nothing magical about any fad diet. It is a function of how much and what we choose to eat. Achieving a healthy weight means that we have to pay careful attention to the calories coming in and the calories being burned.

### Blood Donor Month



In January, National Blood Donor Month, the *American Association of Blood Banks* wants us to know that the need for blood is great. On any given day, an average of 38,000 units of red blood cells are needed. Blood transfusions often are needed for trauma victims due to accidents and burns. Blood is also needed for heart surgeries, organ transplants, and patients receiving treatment for leukemia, cancer, or other diseases such as sickle cell disease. With an aging population and advances in medical treatments and procedures requiring blood transfusions, the demand for blood continues to increase. Fewer than 5 percent of healthy Americans eligible to donate blood actually donate each year. In the past, the average donor has been a white male, but statistics show women and minorities are volunteering in increasing numbers. **Please consider becoming a blood donor.** For more information about giving blood, please log on to AABB's website: [www.aabb.org](http://www.aabb.org)