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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Know the Facts and Protect Yourself from Cervical Cancer
January is Cervical Health Awareness Month**

Cervical cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death among women worldwide. The American Cancer Society estimated that more than 9,000 women would be diagnosed with the disease in 2008, and more than 3,000 would die from it in the United States alone. The good news is that most cases of cervical cancer can be prevented.

Facts About Cervical Cancer and HPV:

- **Cervical cancer is cancer of the cervix.** The cervix is the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina. Abnormal cells can develop in the lining of the cervix. If they're not found early and treated, these abnormal cells can become pre-cancerous and then lead to cervical cancer.
- **Almost every case (99.7%) of cervical cancer is caused by HPV,** or human papillomavirus, a very common type of virus that spreads easily. Most of the time, people who are infected with HPV do not know they have it.
- **Eighty percent of all women have been infected with HPV** by the time they are 50 years old.

Ways to Prevent Cervical Cancer and HPV:

- **Educate yourself.** Ask your doctor or healthcare provider for more information about cervical cancer and HPV.
- **Screen regularly.** Get regular Pap tests and HPV tests. The Pap test can detect cervical changes early before they turn into cancer. Check with your doctor or health provider to find out how often you should have a Pap test and an HPV test.
- **If you are sexually active, limit your number of sexual partners.** Studies report that women who have many sexual partners increase their risk for cervical cancer by increasing their risk of HPV.
- **Lower your risk.** The only way you can totally protect yourself against HPV is to avoid any sexual activity that involves genital contact. If you are sexually active, always – 100 percent of the time – use a condom.
- **Get the HPV vaccine.** If you are under 27, you may be eligible to get the HPV vaccine, Gardasil, which prevents high risk strains of HPV in women. The vaccine is most effective when it is given to young women before they become sexually active. For this reason, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the HPV vaccine for 11-year-old and 12-year-old girls and for girls and women age 13 through 26 who have not been vaccinated or completed the vaccine series.

For more information, please contact the Pinellas County Health Department at (727) 824-6900
or contact your regular health provider.

You may also want to visit <http://www.cervicalcancercampaign.org/> <http://www.cervicalcancercampaign.org/>
or <http://www.cancer.gov> (search for cervical cancer information)

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www.PinellasHealth.com