

Health Unit

Media Release

For immediate release: April 4, 2007



Are you a woman? Are you concerned about your health? **If so, this message is for you!** ***Regular Pap tests can prevent cancer of the cervix!***

Alyx Perry, a local resident, couldn't agree more!

"I'm the face of HPV" Perry says. "I had pre-cancerous cells on my cervix - there were no symptoms and it (abnormal cells) was detected at my regular Pap test."

Human papillomavirus (**HPV**) is the primary cause of cervical cancer. The virus is spread through sexual contact, and it's extremely common. In fact, studies show that about three out of four people who have ever been sexually active have been exposed to some type of the virus. While some types of HPV can cause genital warts, most types- including the types that cause cervical cancer- have no symptoms.

Is it possible to prevent HPV infection?

"Unfortunately, short of total abstinence, preventing HPV infection is not easy," says Dr. Bill Chapman, a pathologist at the University Health Network in Toronto and an expert on HPV. "For example, condoms can partially, but not completely, reduce the risk of transmission. That's because a condom can't cover all the skin where HPV might be present."

It isn't easy to prevent HPV, but it is easy to prevent HPV's unhealthy effects. Regular Pap tests are the best way to detect early cell changes. Caught early, cervical cell changes can be monitored and successfully treated, before they develop into cancer.

Who needs to have a Pap test and how often should you have one?

The Ontario Cervical Screening Program (OCSP) recommends regular Pap tests for all women who are, or have ever been, sexually active. After three normal tests in a row, women can be tested every two to three years.

When was the last time you had a Pap test?

If it's been more than a few years, or if you've never had one, it's time to make an appointment with your doctor or nurse practitioner.

No doctor or nurse practitioner?

From April 23 to May 1st, free Pap tests clinics will be held across Leeds, Grenville and Lanark. All Pap tests will be performed by a female nurse practitioner in a private, woman friendly environment. Call one of the following locations to book an appointment:

Page 2 – Regular Pap tests can prevent cancer of the cervix!

*North Lanark County Community Health Centre
Clinic date: April 23, 2007 from 3 pm- 7 pm
Phone #: 613-259-2182*

CPHC Community Family Health Team (Brockville)
*Clinic date: April 25, 2007 from 3 pm- 7 pm
Phone #: 613-345-5077*

Country Roads Community Health Centre (Portland)
*Clinic date: April 26, 2007 from 3 pm - 7 pm
Phone #: 613-272-3302*

*Merrickville Community Health Centre
Clinic date: April 30, 2007 from 3 pm - 7 pm
Phone #: 613-269-3400*

Smiths Falls Community Health Centre
*Clinic date: May 1, 2007 from 3 pm - 7 pm
Phone#: 613-283-1952*

Take a few minutes to make an appointment. **Regular Pap tests can save your life!**

For more information about HPV, the Pap test, and cervical cancer call the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit's Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685 or visit www.healthunit.org <<http://www.healthunit.org>>

Adapted from OCSP (2006) "Manage your Risk for Cervical Cancer".

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Contacts: **Tawnya Boileau RN, BScN, Public Health Nurse- 613-345-5685 ext. 2226**
Bonnie Schnittker, RN, PHN, Public Health Nurse- 613-283-2740

For an interview with Alyx Perry, please contact the Health Unit.