

January is Cervical Health Month



January is Cervical Health Month, a valuable opportunity to raise public awareness about the importance of prevention, screening and treatment of cervical cancer. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 12 thousand women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year. Sadly, this disease claims the lives of 4 thousand women annually.

“Routine well-woman exams are the best defense against cervical cancer,” says Katharine Sheehan, M.D., Medical Director at Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest. “Because Planned Parenthood is most often associated with contraceptive services many people aren’t aware that we are one of the largest providers of cervical cancer screening in California. Not only does Planned Parenthood provide no-to-low-cost breast and cervical health screenings, we also offer Gardasil, the vaccine which reduces the risk of contracting the highly contagious Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which causes cervical cancer.”

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that at least half of all adults in the United States will contract HPV at some point. Because the virus is contagious, it is wise for women to have a cervical cancer screening on a regular basis. “From age 21, women with no history of abnormalities should have an exam every two years,” advises Sheehan. “After 30, it’s every three years if no changes in cervical health have been detected. A reproductive health care provider, who is familiar with an individual’s medical history, is the best resource for a woman.”

Prevention and early detection of cancer precursors are keys to saving lives. Early signs of cervical abnormalities and effective treatments of such conditions are treated at Planned Parenthood health centers.

“Planned Parenthood is here for every community and works to ensure that every woman has access to the best reproductive health care available,” says Sheehan. “We encourage all women

Courtesy of Planned Parenthood

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to take a few moments and think about what she can do to help reduce her risk of cervical cancer. Perhaps it is the HPV vaccine. Or if it is time for a well-woman exam, make an appointment today.”