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January Is Cervical Health Awareness Month

An estimated 12,820 women were diagnosed with cervical cancer in the United States in 2017 and an estimated 4,210 women nationwide lost their lives to cervical cancer during that year. Cervical Health Awareness Month is a chance to raise awareness about how women can protect themselves from HPV (human papillomavirus) and cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer can often be prevented with regular screening tests (called Pap tests) and follow-up care. A Pap test can help detect abnormal (changed) cells before they turn into cancer. Most deaths from cervical cancer can be prevented if women get regular Pap tests and follow-up care.

HPV is a very common infection that spreads through sexual activity. It's also a major cause of cervical cancer. According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, about 79 million Americans currently have HPV. Many people with HPV don't know they are infected. There is now a vaccine that can prevent HPV and therefore provide protection against cervical cancer.

The Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP) provides free cervical cancer screenings, pelvic exams, diagnostic services, and referrals to uninsured and underinsured Illinois women 35 years and older, regardless of income. The Iroquois County Public Health Department is now enrolling women in the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program. If you are an uninsured or underinsured woman between the ages of 35 and 64, please call Jane Newell at 815-432-2483 to enroll and receive free cervical cancer screenings.

Iroquois County Public Health Department also has HPV vaccines available for adolescents and young adults. Being vaccinated against HPV makes it much less likely a woman will develop cervical cancer. Please call the Iroquois County Public Health Department at 815-432-2483 for more information or to schedule an appointment.