



Connie Beck, Director  
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

## news release

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### Cervical Health Awareness Month focuses on prevention

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month, and the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services, Public Health is joining communities around the U.S. in promoting cervical health.

Unlike most cancers, cervical cancer is preventable. The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, when administered to both male and female preteens, nearly nullifies the chances of women acquiring this sexually transmitted disease later in life.

In addition, screening for cervical cancer (a Pap smear) is recommended for all women ages 21 to 65 years old once every three years as part of well woman care. Women who get well woman care in specialty women's health care settings should make sure that their Pap test results are sent to their primary care provider.

Most cervical cancers are the result of becoming infected with HPV. Preteens should receive two doses of the HPV vaccine (up to age 15) or three doses of the vaccine series long before any type of sexual activity. The HPV vaccine produces a more effective immune response in preteens than it does in older teens and young women.

"Studies have shown that the HPV vaccine is safe and effective at preventing cancer," said Supervising Public Health Nurse Eric Gordon. "Like other vaccines, the HPV vaccine must be given before possible exposure to the disease to be effective in preventing illness."

Clinical trials have shown that the vaccine provides close to 100 percent protection against precancers and genital warts. Since the vaccine was first recommended in 2006, there has been a 56 percent reduction in HPV infections among teen girls in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Parents should speak with their children's health care provider about the HPV vaccine at the 11-to 12-year-old well child visit.

The HPV vaccine is available by appointment at the Public Health Clinic at 529 I St. in Eureka. Appointments are scheduled Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:30 to 11 a.m. and Thursdays from 1 to 4 p.m.

To make an appointment or speak with a Public Health nurse about the vaccine, call 707-268-2108.

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