



# Healthy Woman

News from the Office of Women's Health

Winter 2008

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH • ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH, GOVERNOR • DAMON T. ARNOLD, M.D., M.P.H., DIRECTOR

## WALGREENS DONATES \$50,000 IN GIFT CARDS TO ENCOURAGE SCREENINGS

Walgreens has partnered with the state of Illinois to encourage women to get screened for breast cancer. The first 2,000 women to sign up for the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program by calling the Women's Health-Line at 888-522-1282 to schedule their mammogram will receive a \$25 gift card from Walgreens once their results have been recorded.

The Walgreens campaign began in October, which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In announcing the initiative, Dr. Damon Arnold, M.D., M.P.H., state public health director said, "Many women are often focused on taking care of others – their children, husbands, parents – and don't take the time to take care of themselves. They put off getting their annual mammogram and screenings, sometimes until it's too late. Thanks to Walgreens, we now have a wonderful incentive for women to sign up for the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program and make and keep their appointment to get screened."

Michael Polzin, spokesman for Walgreens, said "Walgreens is happy to help the state of Illinois raise awareness of the importance of breast cancer screenings and to offer women an incentive to sign up for a program that could save their lives."

The Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program offers free breast and cervical cancer screenings to women between the ages of 34 and 65 who have low incomes and no health insurance. Younger women may be eligible in some cases.



## WOMEN'S HEALTH CONFERENCE CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

On Nov. 18-19, 2008, more than 400 women's health advocates gathered at the Oak Brook Hills Marriott Resort for the 10th annual Women's Health Conference. The two-day conference, sponsored by the Illinois Department of Public Health, included tracks that focused on cardiovascular disease, chronic disease and personal and professional development. Conference attendees learned about breast and cervical cancers, metabolic syndrome, arthritis and osteoporosis, as well as tips on how to improve your grant-writing and presentation skills.

Featured speakers included Dr. Diane Wallis, Midwest Heart Specialists, Downer's Grove, Illinois, who returned this year with Part II of "Being Fat is Not All Your Fault – The Link Between Inactivity, Obesity and Metabolic Syndrome." Barb Bancroft, R.N., M.S.N., N.P., Chicago, gave a humorous explanation of the "stress response" and its ramifications on health and happiness. Dr. Steven Dayan, Chicago Center for Facial Plastic Surgery, Chicago, discussed the latest trends in aesthetic medicine and what works and what does not work.

Conference participants also had a variety of workshops to choose from and the opportunity to visit 14 roundtables providing education and outreach information.

Attendees also got a chance to exercise their bodies as well as their minds at this year's conference. On the first day, participants got on their feet for a little "Zumba Magic" and on the second day, they shimmied and shook as they learned belly dance moves.

Be sure to check the Office of Women's Health Web site ([www.idph.state.il.us/about/womenshealth/owh.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/about/womenshealth/owh.htm)) next spring for the date and location of next year's conference.

For pictures of this year's conference, see Page 6.

## CERVICAL CANCER: AN OVERVIEW

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer (excluding skin cancer) in women, yet it is one of the easiest cancers to prevent. In the United States, more than 10,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year and about 3,700 women die from this disease annually.

The latest data for Illinois shows that 560 women were diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2005. That same year, 183 women died of cervical cancer. In 2009, it is estimated that 590 women in Illinois will be diagnosed with

cervical cancer and approximately 200 women will die from it.

Cervical cancer develops when normal cells change to cancer cells. Usually it takes several years for normal cells in the cervix to change into cancer cells. If detected early, cervical cancer is 100 percent curable.

### RISK FACTORS

Strong risk factors include:

- Infection with Human Papillomavirus (HPV)—HPV is a group of more

than 100 different types of viruses. These are separated into low-risk types and high-risk types. The low-risk types of HPV cause genital warts. The high-risk types are related to cervical cancer. Research has proven that most women who develop cervical cancer are infected with the high-risk types of HPV.

- Risky sexual behaviors—Girls who have their first intercourse at an early age and have a history of multiple sexual partners are at an increased risk for

developing cervical cancer.

- Tobacco use—Women who smoke are twice as likely as non-smokers to develop cervical cancer.
- Diethylstilbestrol exposure—Women whose mothers were given the drug Diethylstilbestrol (DES) during pregnancy to prevent miscarriage are at an increased risk for developing cervical cancer. This drug was commonly given in the 1950s, but is not used today.

### REDUCING YOUR RISK

The easiest way to reduce your risk of developing cervical cancer is to get a yearly Pap test and pelvic exam. Your health care provider can find and treat the abnormal cervical cells before they turn into cancer.

Another way to reduce your risk of developing cervical cancer is to get the HPV vaccine. In 2006, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a vaccine that is highly effective in preventing HPV infection. The HPV vaccine is recommended to be administered to girls that are 11 to 12 years old, but can be given to girls as young as 9. The vaccine also is recommended for 13- to 26-year-old girls/women who have not yet received or completed the vaccine series.

The vaccine helps protect against four types of HPV — two types that cause 70 percent of cervical cancers and two more types that cause 90 percent of genital warts. The vaccine should be given

Dear Illinois Women,

While there is often a lot of focus on breast cancer detection and prevention, it is also very important to remember that regular screenings also can detect cervical cancer early, saving lives.

Our challenge now is to ensure that every woman gets regular cervical cancer screenings. Every woman that is screened in Illinois represents an important step forward in protecting the health and well-being of all women in the state. This January, I encourage you to remind the women you work with, and the women in your lives, to have regular cervical cancer screenings.

The expanded Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer program will allow uninsured women older than the age of 35 to receive free cervical cancer screenings. If you know anyone who may be eligible for our program, please call us at the Illinois Department of Public Health's Women's Health-Line at 888-522-1282, contact us via TTY at 1-800-547-0466 or visit [cancerscreening.illinois.gov](http://cancerscreening.illinois.gov).

I appreciate your continued support in protecting the women of Illinois. With your help, we will improve the health of Illinois one woman at a time.

Sincerely,



Damon T. Arnold, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director

before sexual activity begins (before contact with the HPV virus). Those who have not been infected with any type of HPV will benefit most from the vaccine. Girls/women who are sexually active should still be vaccinated because they can get protection from the types of HPV that they have not yet been infected with. Studies are currently being conducted to test the effectiveness of the vaccine on males and older women.

The vaccine may not fully protect everyone against contracting HPV. It does not prevent all types of cervical cancer, so it is very important to continue with regular cervical cancer screenings. Condoms do not prevent the transmission of HPV. The only way you can totally protect yourself against HPV is to avoid any sexual activity that includes genital contact.

### SYMPTOMS

Early stages of cervical cancer and precancerous changes of the cervix usually show no symptoms or signs. Typically symptoms develop when the cancer has become invasive and spread to nearby tissue. When this happens, the most common symptom is abnormal vaginal bleeding. Abnormal bleeding may include bleeding after menopause, bleeding that starts and stops between periods, bleeding that occurs after intercourse or a pelvic exam, or menstrual bleeding that lasts longer and is heavier than usual. Another symptom may be foul smelling

vaginal discharge, which can occur before bleeding, because a large cancerous tumor has become infected.

### DIAGNOSIS

A Pap test is the first step in diagnosing cervical cancer. Although you might think an abnormal Pap test means you have cervical cancer, the fact is that the majority of abnormal Pap tests do not reveal cancer. The more likely cause of abnormal Pap test results is inflammation or a vaginal infection, such as HPV. If the Pap test is abnormal, some of the procedures listed below may be necessary to aid in further diagnosis:

- Colposcopy—the doctor applies a vinegar-type solution to the cervix to highlight abnormal cells. Then a colposcope is used to look closely at the cervix. This device resembles a type of microscope.
- Biopsy—if the doctor identifies an abnormality during the colposcopy, a small sample of tissue is removed. This tissue is then analyzed by a pathologist for precancerous changes or cancer cells.
- Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure (LEEP)—if a precancerous lesion is identified, the practitioner uses an electric wire loop to shave off a thin, round piece of tissue.
- Conization (cone biopsy)—the doctor removes a larger, cone-shaped sample of tissue.

### TREATMENT

The choice of treatment depends on the location and size of the tumor, the stage (extent) of the disease, the woman's age, general health and other factors. Most often, the treatment involves surgery and radiation therapy. Sometimes, chemotherapy or biological therapy is used. The doctor may decide to use one treatment or a combination of treatments. Surgery may involve removing the tissue in or near the cervix, the cervix or the entire uterus (hysterectomy). Radiation therapy uses high-energy rays to damage cancer cells and stop them from growing. Chemotherapy is the use of drugs to kill cancer cells. It is most often used when cervical cancer has spread to other parts of the body. The doctor may use one drug or a combination of drugs. Biological therapy is treatment using substances to improve the way the body's immune system fights disease, and it may be used to treat cancer that has spread from the cervix to other parts of the body.

### SOURCES

Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health  
888-522-1282  
[www.idph.state.il.us](http://www.idph.state.il.us)

National Women's Health Information Center  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Women's Health  
800-994-9662  
[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)

## RAISE CERVICAL CANCER AWARENESS DURING JANUARY

January has been designated as Cervical Cancer Awareness Month in Illinois to educate women on the risks of cervical cancer and to encourage women to get screened regularly for cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer once was the leading cause of cancer deaths in women; however, during the past four decades cervical cancer cases and deaths have declined significantly because of widespread Pap testing. A Pap test can detect cancer or abnormalities that may lead to cancer of the cervix. Most cervical cancers are slow-growing and develop over a long period of time. During this time, abnormal cervical tissue can be detected easily by a Pap test and then removed by a health care provider before the tissue develops into cancer.

Getting regular Pap tests can save a woman's life. Six out of 10 cervical cancers occur in women who have never had a Pap test or have not been screened in the past five years.

*(continued on Page 8)*



In an effort to make sure every woman knows the importance of routine breast cancer screenings, and to make sure every uninsured woman in Illinois knows about the availability of free breast and cervical cancer screenings and low-cost treatment to women who qualify for Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, beauty salons across the state are joining in the “Beautiful Inside & Out” initiative.

Nearly 350 salon professionals throughout Illinois have attended 19 train-the-trainer sessions to learn about the importance of early detection and screenings, and how to become advocates for routine breast and cervical cancer screenings. In addition, the Office of Women’s Health mailed out more than 30,000 postcards to salon owners, licensed cosmetologists and nail techs to invite them to take the trainings online. Salon professionals can then pass this information on to their clients, friends, family and coworkers and potentially save a woman’s life.

Breast cancer will claim the lives of nearly 2,000 women in Illinois this year. In women older than the age of 20, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed type of cancer.

According to the American Cancer Society, the five-year survival rate for breast cancer is 98 percent when it is detected early, before there are any symptoms. When breast cancer is detected in later stages, after it has progressed and transferred to other parts of the body, the survival rate drops to 26 percent. Cervical cancer is also treatable if detected early.

The best way to detect cancer early is to have regular breast and cervical cancer screenings. Through IBCCP, eligible women 35 or older can get cervical cancer screenings, and women 40 or older can get breast cancer screenings. Younger women who have symptoms also may be eligible.

If cancer is found, IBCCP offers access to low-cost treatment. Even if a woman has been diagnosed with cancer outside of the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, she may still receive low-cost treatment.

Since the inception of IBCCP in October 2005, more than 98,000 women in Illinois have received free screenings through IBCCP. But there are thousands more women in Illinois who still are not getting the care and coverage they need.

For more information on IBCCP and the “Beautiful Inside & Out” initiative, log onto [www.cancerscreening.illinois.gov](http://www.cancerscreening.illinois.gov).

## NORTHWESTERN IS NEWEST LEAD AGENCY

The Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP) is happy to announce that Northwestern Memorial Hospital is a new lead agency for the program. This addition brings the total of lead agencies to 37, and continues to help the program reach even more women in the Chicagoland region.

As IBCCP continues to grow, we continue to need additional medical providers to provide cancer screenings and treatment options for Illinois women without insurance. For more information on becoming involved in IBCCP, please contact Shannon Lightner at [shannon.r.lightner@illinois.gov](mailto:shannon.r.lightner@illinois.gov).

## REACH INWARD IN ORDER TO REACH OUT

The Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP) offers breast and cervical screenings to uninsured women regardless of income, but too many women who qualify still do not know about the program. Together, we can help make sure that IBCCP is no longer the best kept secret in Illinois. One of the easiest ways to conduct “outreach” is to actually conduct “in-reach” and to make sure that the women your agency is serving know about IBCCP.

January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month and a great time to think about in-reach. Start with the receptionists in your agencies – make sure that the receptionists know about IBCCP, and how to refer a woman who inquires about free mammograms or Pap tests. Reach out to other health care professionals in your agencies, letting them know how to refer their patients to IBCCP. If your agency has a social service team, give them IBCCP brochures to hand out to the clients they see. Have IBCCP posters and IBCCP brochures in any waiting rooms or lobbies in all of your facilities.

Use Cervical Cancer Awareness Month as a reason to engage your colleagues in conversations about IBCCP. Make sure that the staff at your agencies understand the program, and encourage them to talk to their patients

and clients about the importance of regular breast and cervical cancer screenings. A significant amount of IBCCP referrals are received from health care professionals who have taken the time to educate themselves and spread the knowledge to their clients and colleagues.

The program challenges IBCCP lead agencies, hospitals, clinics, health departments, physicians and anyone in the health and social service fields to promote IBCCP within their respective offices, while also extending a presence in the community. Think creatively! Bring IBCCP materials to the schools in your community. If during an office visit for a school physical, the pediatrician or even the receptionist learns that the mother of a patient is uninsured, he/she could inform her of IBCCP and encourage her to enroll. This can be accomplished in a minute or two. Sometimes a trigger is all a woman needs to take the initiative to call and enroll in the program.

Remember – informational brochures and posters are available at no cost by calling the Women’s Health-Line at 888-522-1282 or on the Web at [www.cancerscreening.illinois.gov](http://www.cancerscreening.illinois.gov). The Office of Women’s Health also has a number of different IBCCP giveaways available by request.

## Women’s Health-Line 888-522-1282



If you have health-related questions or concerns, the health-line staff will help you find the answers. You may call the toll-free number weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. After hours, calls are recorded on voice mail and responded to during the next workday. Always completely confidential and free of charge, the Women’s Health-Line is one resource for all women in Illinois. The Women’s Health-Line can help you find:

- the answer to a question about a women’s health issue
- the nearest clinic offering mammography through the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program
- information about sexually transmitted diseases in women
- where to take your adolescent child for therapy for an eating disorder
- a supply of brochures or fact sheets about healthy lifestyles

# Healthy Woman



## 2008 Women's Health Conference



## HEART DISEASE AWARENESS TO BE FEBRUARY'S FOCUS

February is not only a time to celebrate love, romance and Valentine's Day, but a time to celebrate heart health awareness.

February has been designated as American Heart Month to help raise public awareness of heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of disability. In August 2008, legislation was signed into law designating February of each year as Women's Heart Disease Awareness Month in Illinois.

The most common heart disease in the United States is coronary heart disease, which often appears as a heart attack. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about every 26 seconds, an American will have a coronary event, and about one every minute will die.

Even though most people associate heart disease with men, it's also the leading cause of death among women. According to Illinois data, nearly 22,000 females died of cardiovascular disease in 2002, which includes heart disease and strokes. Heart disease includes coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, angina and other conditions. The latest statistics show that more than 14,300 women in Illinois died from heart disease in 2005.

Despite the fact that more women die from cardiovascular disease than from the next six causes combined, most women do not consider it their greatest risk. To raise awareness of heart disease as an important women's health issue, the national *Heart Truth* campaign and its Red Dress Project will be on display Jan. 26 to Jan. 30, 2009, in the rotunda of the Illinois State Capitol building.

Launched by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, *The Heart Truth* campaign features a red dress as the symbol for women and heart disease awareness. The Red Dress Project includes a traveling collection of red dresses contributed by top fashion designers. The red dresses signal a red alert that heart disease doesn't care what you wear and is not just a disease that affects men.

Coordinated by the Illinois Department of Public Health's Office of Women's Health, the Red Dress event will serve as a kick-off to Women's Heart Disease Awareness Month and Wear Red Day, which is Feb. 6, 2009. Wear Red Day is a day when Americans nationwide will wear red to show their support for women's heart disease awareness.

### HEART FACTS

#### Risk Factors

While certain risk factors are uncontrollable, including age, family history or race, there are some things everyone can do to prevent heart disease:

- Control blood pressure, cholesterol and weight (especially inches around the waist)
- Avoid smoking
- Reduce stress
- Engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days
- Consult physician about heart attack risks
- Eat a nutritious and balance diet

#### Signs and Symptoms

Additionally, knowing the signs and symptoms of heart attack are crucial to the most positive outcomes after having a heart attack. Know your signs and symptoms. Some heart attacks are sudden and intense; however, most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs. These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

Women are more likely than men to have such symptoms as; shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting and back or jaw pain.



Photo courtesy of *The Heart Truth*, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. *The Heart*

*Cervical Cancer Awareness, continued from Page 3*

During January, your agency or organization may wish to highlight issues related to cervical cancer, human papillomavirus (HPV) disease and the importance of early detection. Organize a local event to raise awareness of, or money for cervical cancer/HPV research and then invite the media to attend.

Here are some ideas to share with your clients about how they can observe Cervical Cancer Awareness Month:

- Know your own risk. Being infected with the human papillomavirus (HPV), having intercourse at an early age, having multiple sex partners, and smoking increase your risk. In addition, women whose mothers were given the drug Diethylstilbestrol (DES) during pregnancy to prevent miscarriage are at increased risk.
- Post information about cervical cancer prevention on bulletin boards at work, local community centers, places of worship, the library and post office.
- Send all the women in your life an e-mail reminding them of the importance of cervical health. Post information on your MySpace or Facebook account.
- Get your friends together and have a Pink Potluck. Just like a regular potluck, everyone brings a healthy dish or dessert to share and the state provides information about getting screened for breast and cervical cancer.

Although January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, cervical cancer awareness is important all year-round so do not limit these activities to one month. Keep the conversation and awareness going throughout the year.

## FISCAL YEAR 2010 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Interested in applying for a Women's Health Initiative Grant for Fiscal Year 2010? Applications can be obtained by calling 217-524-9297; or look for the application on the Illinois Department of Public Health's Web site: <http://www.idph.state.il.us/about/womenshealth/fund.htm>. Applications will be available by January 26, 2009, and are due April 6, 2009.



### EVENTS CALENDAR:

**January** – Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

**January 26 to 30** – Red Dress Display, Rotunda, Illinois State Capitol

**February** – American Heart Month

**February 6** – Wear Red Day

**March 16** – Ticket for the Cure Community grant applications due

**April 6** – Women's Health Initiative grant applications due

**May** – National Osteoporosis Prevention and Awareness Month

**May 10-16** – National Women's Health Week

Healthy Woman newsletter is published semiannually by the Illinois Department of Public Health. Story ideas, suggestions and comments are welcome and should be forwarded to Tammy Leonard, Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health, 535 W. Jefferson St., First Floor, Springfield, IL, 62761; or call 217-524-6088.

Generally, articles in this newsletter may be reproduced in part or in whole by an individual or organization without permission, although credit should be given to the Illinois Department of Public Health. Articles reprinted in this newsletter may require permission from the original publisher.

The information provided in this newsletter is a public service. It is not intended to be a substitute for medical care or consultation with your health care provider and does not represent an endorsement by the Illinois Department of Public Health. To be included on the mailing list or to unsubscribe, send an e-mail to Tammy Leonard at [tammy.l.leonard@illinois.gov](mailto:tammy.l.leonard@illinois.gov).