

**NEWS RELEASE  
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**DATE:** January 7, 2011

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**National Cervical Cancer Coalition Stresses Importance of Screening and Prevention During January Cervical Health Awareness Month**

*Women Urged to Take Action and Protect Themselves in New Year*

Approximately 12,000 American women will learn they have cervical cancer/HPV this year. This January, during Cervical Health Awareness month, the National Cervical Cancer Coalition (NCCC) and the Cancer Resource Centers of Mendocino County are focusing on educating women about the importance of the Pap test as a screening tool for cervical cancer/HPV and about vaccines that can further reduce the burden of this devastating disease.

It's the start of a new year—a time many reflect on their health. To start the year right, we encourage women to contact their health care provider to schedule a Pap test to check for cervical cancer. In Gualala and Point Arena, in addition to local gynecologists, the Redwood Coast Medical Services offers Pap tests. If you are over 25, have low income, and your insurance does not cover cervical cancer screenings or has a high deductible or co-payment, you may be eligible for a free pap test. To see if you qualify for free services, please call the California Department of Public Health Every Woman Counts Program at 1-800-511-2300. This screening is a crucial part of a woman's health care regimen, yet one that many overlook. Here are current guidelines for screening:

- Cervical Cancer Screening should begin 3 years after first sexual activity, but not later than 21 years old and should be done every year.
- Women over 30 should have a Pap test at least once every 2-3 years
- Women over 70 who have had at least three normal Pap tests and no abnormal Pap tests in the last 10 years may decide, upon consultation with their healthcare provider, to stop cervical cancer screening.
- Women who have had a total hysterectomy (removal of the uterus and cervix) do not need to undergo cervical cancer screening, unless the surgery was done as a treatment for cervical precancer or cancer.

While routine administration of Pap tests is the best means of detecting cervical cancer at an early stage, vaccines have the potential to protect women from the disease, by targeting cancer-causing types of the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV, a virus transmitted through sexual contact, is a known cause of cervical cancer. Vaccines can help protect against 4 types of HPV, two of which cause about 75% of cervical cancer cases.