

## **January is Cervical Health Awareness Month**

### **The HPV Vaccine and Cervical Cancer Prevention**

In June 2006, the FDA approved the first HPV vaccine, Gardasil, to prevent HPV infection and cervical dysplasia. More recently, in October 2009, a second HPV vaccine, Cervarix, was also approved by the FDA. These vaccines represent a major breakthrough in the fight against cervical cancer, as they protect against two high risk HPV types that account for at least 70% of the cervical cancers in the United States.

#### **Recommended Groups**

The vaccine is routinely recommended among girls 11-12 years. Catch-up vaccination is recommended for girls and young women 13-26 years. In October 2009, Gardasil was also approved for boys and young men and provisional recommendations were released recommending vaccination of boys and young men 9-26 years to reduce their likelihood of developing genital warts.

#### **Effectiveness**

Both vaccines have been found to be highly effective, with large trials conducted around the world finding upwards of 95% of vaccinated girls protected if they received the vaccine prior to exposure to the HPV types found in the vaccine (i.e. prior to onset of sexual activity).

#### **Safety**

The most common side effects associated with the vaccines included local injection site redness and pain, fever, headache and nausea. Since vaccine licensure, there have been reports of syncope (fainting) after vaccination, which is a side effect of many vaccines and more common in adolescents.

Although the HPV vaccines protect against the 2 most common HPV types that cause 70% of cervical cancers, vaccinated women still require cervical cancer screening with the Pap test beginning at age 21 years since the vaccine will not protect against all HPV types that cause cervical cancer.

#### **Free Pap Tests Available in Los Angeles County**

Cervical cancer is a preventable disease that no woman should have to die from. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's Office of Women's Health provides appointments for free or low cost Pap tests to low income uninsured women via our multi-lingual hotline: **1-800-793-8090**. Services are available in seven languages: English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese and Armenian.

For more information on the **Office of Women's Health**, please visit our website:

[www.publichealth.org/owh](http://www.publichealth.org/owh) or [www.preventionmatters.org](http://www.preventionmatters.org)

For more information on cervical cancer, please click on the attached link from the **National Cervical Cancer Coalition**. [http://newsinfusion.com/video\\_details.php?videoId=409#](http://newsinfusion.com/video_details.php?videoId=409#)