

For Your Health

Cervical Cancer Awareness Month can become a thing of the past

Operation Wipe Out aims at eliminating cervical cancer

During January, Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) encouraged all Alabamians to take part in OPERATION WIPE OUT and take the steps that can eliminate cervical cancer.

“It’s Cervical Cancer Awareness Month—for now,” Nancy Wright, director of the ADPH Cancer Prevention and Control Division, said. “But we’re working toward a future where this month isn’t a reminder... it’s a celebration, or better yet no longer needed at all.”

It is now known that cervical cancer can be eliminated, and everyone is needed to help make it happen. Cervical cancer is caused by HPV, the human papillomavirus. Cervical cancer can be eliminated if Alabama residents take three steps to heart: 1) HPV vaccination, 2) HPV/Pap test screening, and 3) Follow-up with your doctor

if the HPV/Pap test is abnormal – an abnormal result does not mean a woman has cancer.

Step 1: The HPV vaccine is a powerful step toward a future without cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine prevents the virus that causes nearly all cervical cancers. It also protects against five other cancers that impact men and women, including head and neck cancer. It is recommended for boys and girls, and young adults ages 9-26.

Discuss the HPV vaccine with your healthcare provider. It is important to get the vaccine before being exposed to the virus. Also, the vaccine is free for boys and girls under age 19 who have no insurance, are underinsured, have Medicaid, or identify as an American or Alaskan Native.

For more information, go to <https://www.alabamapub->

[lichealth.gov/immunization/vaccines-for-children.html](https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization/vaccines-for-children.html)

Step 2: Cervical cancer screening should begin at age 21 with a Pap test. Once a woman is age 30, screening should include an HPV co-test or HPV test alone. The HPV/Pap test will determine if a woman has the HPV virus or has pre-cancer. It is over 95 percent effective in discovering cervical pre-cancer or cancer.

Women with no insurance and a low income may be eligible for free screening, further testing, and even treatment through the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. Call 1-877-252-3324 for more information.

Step 3: If you receive a call from your healthcare provider that the screening test is abnormal, it is essential to return to your healthcare provider. The next step may be to

monitor you more closely or have a diagnostic test called a colposcopy to confirm pre-cancer or cancer.

Alabama has a higher mortality rate than most of the nation because women do not follow up with the doctor after an abnormal result. “Most women do not know that cervical cancer can be eliminated,” Mrs. Wright said.

“Tell your family, friends, neighbors, church members, and colleagues about the steps needed to stop this cancer. Join OPERATION WIPE OUT, an effort to educate and empower our communities to spread the word about how to end cervical cancer. Together, we can eliminate cervical cancer in Alabama.”

Learn more at <https://operationwipeout.org/>

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH PRESS RELEASE

Be aware of diabetes risk factors

Contributed by Janaya Wheeler

According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, diabetes affects about 38 million Americans, including children and adults. Diabetes is a disease that occurs when glucose levels are high and can cause damage to the eyes, kidneys, nerves, and heart.

Risk factors for diabetes among adults 18 years and older include smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. It is also important to be aware of family health history to identify potential increased health risks.

For example, diabetes affects about 13.6% of American Indian/Alaskan

Native adults, 12.1% of non-Hispanic Black adults, 11.7% of Hispanic adults, 9.1% of Asian American adults, and 6.9% of non-Hispanic White adults.

According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), in Alabama, about 631,400 adults are diagnosed with diabetes. Alabama’s diabetes rate exceeds the national aver-

age, making it crucial for Alabamians to check in with their primary care physicians for regular healthcare management and checkups.

Community programs offered throughout Alabama by the American Diabetes Association provide access to healthier foods, nutrition education, and disease management resources.

The ADA’s annual State of Diabetes event continues to serve as an informative platform that brings together healthcare professionals, community partners, and advocates across Alabama.

Additional educational opportunities, such as multi-session workshops focused on healthy eating and diabetes manage-

ment, are offered through the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), highlighting practical strategies for improving nutrition, managing blood pressure, and building healthier habits. These programs and sessions play a vital role in supporting individuals and communities in improving the overall quality of life.