

Cervical Cancer Screening: New Guidelines, New Choices

This week on MedMinute...New guidelines can help women know when and how they should be screened for cervical cancer. An expert says screening can be critical in detecting the disease at an early, treatable stage.

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One of the great success stories in cancer prevention and treatment is screening for cervical cancer. Regular screening using the Pap smear test has helped reduce the death rate from cervical cancer among women in the United States dramatically in the past 50 years. Evan Myers, associate professor of OB-GYN in the Clinical and Epidemiological Research Division at Duke University Medical Center, says early detection is key to preventing the disease.

"Cervical cancer, maybe uniquely among cancers, is one that is very susceptible to prevention through screening and early detection, not only because early-stage cancer has a very high survival rate but also because cervical cancer has a very long pre-cancerous stage, which is most of what in this country we detect through screening."

Myers says new screening guidelines from the American Cancer Society can help a woman and her physician decide what's best for her in terms of screening.

"It's important for women to be screened regularly, but how often a woman should be screened is based on her age, her history and what kind of tests are being used. It's really a decision she should be involved in making."

I'm Cabell Smith for MedMinute.