



New test better at finding cervical cancer

By Donella Young MD, North Basin Medical Clinics



Women are busy, and as precious as each minute is, who has time to think about whether they're getting the best, most accurate pap test at their annual checkup?

Not me. Fortunately, women in Lincoln County can rest assured that they're getting the cutting edge in cancer diagnosis when they have a routine pelvic exam and pap at the Davenport, Wilbur or Reardan Clinic. How is this possible? With Sure Path liquid pap.

Sure Path liquid pap is a new technology that provides for a better sample and more accurate reading of a pap smear. The latest study shows it to be over 64.4 percent more accurate than conventional pap testing. To me, that translates into thousands of lives saved.

Worldwide, cervical cancer is the second most common form of cancer among women. It is also the most preventable because of the innovation of the pap test over 50 years ago which has reduced cervical cancer related deaths by 70 percent.

Even with the success of traditional pap testing, it has its limitations, such as samples which include blood, mucus or other obscuring material. These things often make it hard to find cancerous cells which means many women are asked to come back in for a second test or the cancer can be missed altogether.

Over those 50 years, nothing changed -- until now. Good just got better.

With the innovation of the *liquid* pap test, 100 percent of the sample is sent to the lab. This means technicians have more cells to make a determination from. They also have a clearer sample to look at, free of obscuring material. Lab technicians who read these slides say the difference is like night and day between the traditional pap and the new liquid technology.

A side benefit to the new pap technology is that if your healthcare provider feels more tests need to be done, they can often do them from the original sample. This means fewer follow up appointments.

As for a pap and pelvic exam, women need to get one every year. Cervical cancer can be deadly, but early detection by a pap smear can save your life. Signs and symptoms of cervical cancer don't always present themselves until the later stages of development. You can be symptom free and still have cancer. Symptoms include...

- Bleeding between menstrual cycles
- Any unusual vaginal discharge or pain
- Bleeding after intercourse
- Bleeding after menopause

Of course, risk increases for women who started having sexual intercourse before age 18, or have had many partners. Smokers and women with a sexually transmitted disease are also at greater risk, as are ladies over 60.

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