

## MEMBER TIP SHEET

### Cervical Cancer Screening: Get the RIGHT TEST at the RIGHT TIME

#### What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is a disease where abnormal cells grow on the cervix. The cervix is located at the bottom part of the uterus; it opens into the vagina.

#### What causes cervical cancer?

**Human papillomavirus (HPV)** is the main cause of cervical cancer. HPV can pass from one person to another during sex. Most people get HPV, but it usually goes away on its own. If it doesn't go away, it can cause cancer. Anyone with a cervix can get cervical cancer, but you may be more likely to get it if:

- You become sexually active at an early age
- You have many sexual partners
- You smoke
- You have a weakened immune system
- You are overweight or obese
- You have a family history of cervical cancer

#### What can I do to protect myself/my child?

- **Get vaccinated.** Both girls and boys ages 11 to 12 should get vaccinated against HPV. They can receive their first HPV vaccine as early as age 9. Talk with your child's Provider to learn more about HPV and how many doses of vaccine they should receive. The HPV vaccine is available to Members of Community First Health Plans at no cost.
- **Get a Pap test.** Pap tests (Pap smears) are recommended every three years for women ages 21 to 29 and are covered under your Community First health plan. Women age 30 and older can consider Pap testing every five years if the procedure is combined with testing for HPV.
- **Get an HPV test.** HPV tests are recommended every five years for women ages 30 to 65. Sometimes you'll get an HPV test at the same time as a Pap test – this is called co-testing.

#### Why is screening so important?

Screening tests can find abnormal cells that can be treated before they become cancer. The Pap test looks for precancers - cell changes on the cervix that might become cervical cancer if they are not treated appropriately. The HPV test looks for the virus (human papillomavirus) that can cause these cell changes.



### **When should I/my child get their first Pap test?**

Start at the age of 21. If the test is normal, repeat it every three years. At age 30, if test results are normal, get a Pap test every three years and both a Pap and HPV test every five years. You no longer need to get screened if you are over 65 or your cervix was removed during surgery.

### **How can I schedule an appointment?**

If you need help making an appointment, call 210-358-6055 or email [healthyhelp@cfhp.com](mailto:healthyhelp@cfhp.com).