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**CONTACT:** Leslie Kinnee

989-831-3669, [kinnee@mmdhd.org](mailto:kinnee@mmdhd.org)

Mid-Michigan District Health Department

615 N. State St., Stanton, MI 48888-9702, [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org)

## Early detection vital to surviving cervical cancer

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns MI~ According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 12,000 new cases of cervical cancer will be diagnosed in 2011, of which an estimated 4,210 will die.

For this reason, Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD), is reminding women of the importance of an annual Pap test to screen for cervical cancer.

A Pap test is an important part of a woman's health care routine because it can detect cancer or abnormalities that may lead to cancer of the cervix. Most cervical cancers are slow-growing and develop over a long period of time. During this time, abnormal cervical tissue can be detected easily by a Pap test and then removed by a health care provider before the tissue develops into cancer.

Most cases of cervical cancer are found in women younger than 50, but many women do not know that as they get older they are still at risk. This is why it is important for older women to continue to have a regular Pap test.

"This test can save your life," said Dr. Graham. "No one should die from cervical cancer because it is a cancer that can be easily cured, if diagnosed early. Pick up the phone and make an appointment with your health-care provider today."

The Michigan Department of Community Health recommends yearly Pap tests and exams for women beginning at age 21 or three years after the onset of sexual activity, whichever occurs first.

"Because cervical cancer is preventable and detectable early, it is just so sad, and unfortunate, to have any women dying of this disease," said Dr. Graham.

For women who may not have health insurance, the health department offers a program through the Michigan Department of Community Health called the Breast & Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP), which provides free breast exams, mammograms, pelvic exams and Pap tests to women age 50 to 64 who meet income and insurance guidelines. Women who are diagnosed with cancer through the BCCCP may be eligible to receive Medicaid for cancer treatment.

"If you have not had a Pap smear in the last year, visit your health-care provider, or if you don't have insurance, please call the health department and see if you qualify for this special program," said Dr. Graham.

It is also recommended that adolescents, age 11 to 13 years of age, receive the FDA approved Gardasil vaccine, which is believed to prevent up to 70 percent of cervical cancers.

For more information on the BCCCP, visit [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org) or call MMDHD at:

Clinton Branch Office: 989-224-2195

Gratiot Branch Office: 989-875-3681

Montcalm Branch Office: 989-831-5522

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