

WELL NOW

SPRING 1998

YOUR HEALTH CENTER NEWSLETTER

IS IT YOUR FIRST TIME? *what to expect at the gynecologist*

"It's my first time to the gynecologist".

The simple phrase makes you shudder, doesn't it? (I'm talking specifically to women here, for the slower readers in my audience).

Weeks before I made my first appointment, I could almost feel the bite of the frigid stirrups against my bare feet, and I swore I could hear the sound of snapping latex gloves as my overimaginative brain worked itself into a frenzy.

Well, that's what was running through my mind as I waited for the gynecologist, completely naked except for my socks (with a hole in the toe) and a flimsy sheet that, in my opinion, barely met the requirements of an official "annual exam covering sheet."

I jumped from one negative emotion to the next; I was terrified, nervous, embarrassed, and basically not happy to allow someone violate my vulnerable self. I couldn't believe I was putting myself through such torturous humiliation willingly.

Surprisingly, after the deed was done, my "first time" ended up being a bearable experience. My anxiety and terrible fantasies slowly faded as my doctor took me through each step, explaining every minute detail of the process.

She understood what I felt (after all, she has to go through the same examination every year too). My doctor walked the fine line between professionalism and humaneness; she kept important topics

factual while bantering about her travels in Europe.

It's okay to be nervous and feel a little anticipation for your "first time". It's a difficult thing to initiate (especially if you've been thinking about it for a while, like I did). But I promise that it's not that bad. Really. (The stirrups even have warm fuzzy coverings on them).

I can't stress enough how important it is to make an appointment for your annual women's health exam when you start having sex or when you are 20 years old (whichever comes first). These exams can detect early signs of cancer (cervical or breast) so that you can be treated in time. They ensure that your sexual organs look and feel normal externally as well as internally. Women go to the gynecologist to gain important information about birth control, and to receive prescriptions for the pill, Depo-Provera (a birth control shot), or any other method. Women also gain important information regarding their menstrual cycle, vaginal health, and/or sexuality.

Many women in college say that they've "never thought about it" as a reason not to go to the gynecologist. An annual helps you learn about your bodily functions and how to take care of yourself and prevent future pain and disease.

Please think about it.

If you want any more information, or would like to schedule an appointment, call the Women's Clinic at the Health Center at 346-4449.

—Jenny Lara Semadeni

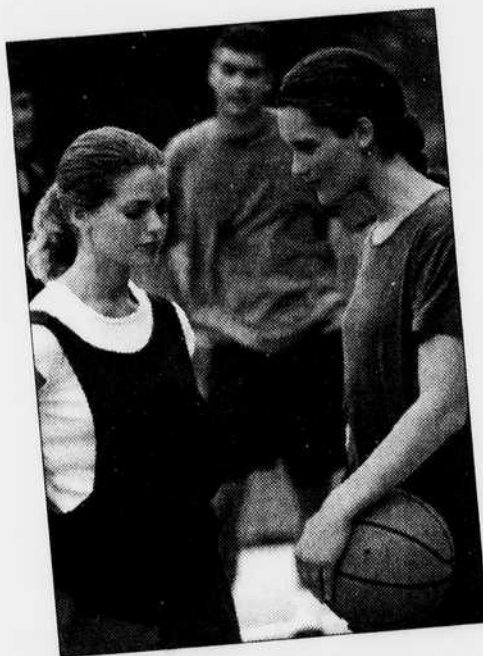
WHAT HAPPENS AT YOUR ANNUAL WOMEN'S HEALTH EXAM?

1. Nurse checks blood pressure, height, weight.
2. Medical practitioner reviews your personal history and asks you about any personal concerns: are your periods normal? do you have abnormal pain? do you exercise regularly? smoke? are you on/do you need birth control?
3. You undress and medical practitioner feels thyroid then conducts breast examination, feeling for unusual masses.
5. Practitioner feels abdomen for pain, unusual masses.
6. Pelvic exam: practitioner looks for redness, swelling, bumps around vagina, then uses a speculum to look for the same inside vagina and on cervix.
7. Pap Smear: practitioner rubs off some exfoliated cells off of the cervix to send to a lab where they screen for cervical cancer (they also test for chlamydia at the same time).
8. Bi-manual exam: practitioner inserts 2 fingers into vagina and uses other hand to feel uterus and ovaries, assessing size and shape or presence of tenderness.
10. You dress; discuss concerns with practitioner and practitioner prescribes any needed medication or birth control.
11. You receive Pap and chlamydia results in the mail about 2 weeks later.

Cost of the Health Center: \$5 for the visit \$21.50 for Pap Smear, \$35.50 for Pap and Chlamydia test.
Cost of a private practice: \$100-\$150

WHAT WOMEN SHOULD KNOW

questions & answers with a UO nurse practitioner



Cindy Smith is an Adult Nurse Practitioner who has a master's degree in nursing from the University of California, San Francisco. She works full time at the Health Center. We recently interviewed her about common women's health issues at the UO.

Wellnow: If you had all of the University students in a forum together, what is the single most important thing that you would tell them?

Cindy: The Health Center belongs to you, so take advantage of its presence on your campus. From a women's health standpoint, I would emphasize that students should make informed decisions, and that is the result of education. We are available to provide that information. That means that no question is too ridiculous, and no con-

cern too small.

Wellnow: What is the most common myth that women come into the Health Center believing?

Cindy: I would have to say one of the most common myths in women's health care might be, "It can't happen to me." I regularly see students who must deal with a pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection that they absolutely thought would never happen to them.

Wellnow: What are some of the services at the Women's Clinic?

Cindy: When a student wishes to come to the Women's Clinic, she can see her choice of either a nurse practitioner or a physician. Both male and female providers are available. There is also a specialist (gynecologist) available two half-days a week to see students. There are many services available, such as birth control, pregnancy testing, emergency contraception, HIV testing, STI screening, well women exams (such as pap smears and mammogram screening), colposcopy (sometimes used to follow-up on abnormal pap smears) and an evaluation of any number of GYN problems.

Examples include: evaluation of a breast lump, dysmenorrhea (painful menstrual cramps), abnormal bleeding, menopausal concerns, infection treatment, eating disorders, or PMS concerns. Though forensic exams are not done at the Health Center, students do come in for evaluations related to sexual assault.

Wellnow: What are the most common problems that women go to the Health Center for and what are their treatment options?

Cindy: Some of the most common visits to the Women's Clinic are for birth control, annual exams, and infection checks. When students come in for birth control, they will be provided with explanations of the pros and cons of a variety of hormonal and non hormonal birth control methods.

If desired and appropriate, IUD or norplant insertion, diaphragm or cervical cap fitting and Depo Provera or oral contraceptive prescriptions are available. The UO pharmacy carries other forms of birth control such as condoms and spermicides.

The Women's Clinic staff recognizes that the University of Oregon student population is a well educated group. I appreciate the interest they show in trying to understand their health better. I try to provide them with information and educational materials to help them make informed decisions about their bodies.

It's not uncommon for me to be providing a student with a web site to read more about a particular health topic or copy of an article.

With regard to treatment options, depending on the circumstances, students can be treated in the clinic for most concerns, but we certainly assist with referrals into the community when necessary. Referrals are also made to the Counseling Center.

Wellnow: What's the average age that a woman should begin to see a gynecologist?

Cindy: Women should come in for their first annual exam when they become sexually active, regardless of age, or if they are not sexually active by age 20. If they are considering becoming sexually active and have questions about or need birth control, they should come to the clinic even though it may not necessitate an exam at that visit.

Wellnow: What are some of the benefits of getting regular checkups, and what are the consequences of not receiving them?

Cindy: There are both short and long term benefits and consequences. Routine annual exams are a valuable opportunity to screen for cancer of the breasts, ovaries, uterus, and cervix. Risk factors for future morbidity can be assessed and early intervention or prevention efforts taken.

Screening tests can often pick up asymptomatic illnesses. For instance, chlamydia infection is often asymptomatic and an undiagnosed infection could possibly lead to infertility.

Visits to the Women's Clinic can lead to prompt treatment of illnesses or simply alleviate unnecessary fear about something that a student is concerned with.

To make an appointment with Cindy Smith or any other staff member, call the Health Center (Women's Clinic) 346-4449.

—Tiffany Marie Shleifer

Workshops SPRING '98

Peer health educators organize and run most of our workshops. So not only do you learn cool stuff, you meet new people and have some fun.

Smoking Cessation

Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00 p.m.
April 23-May 28
Medical Library

Quit smoking this term and celebrate life as a non smoker. This six week workshop is open to those who want to quit and those who have already quit. Identify triggers to smoke, learn to overcome urges, adopt alternative behaviors, and address fears about possible weight gain.

Weight Management

Wednesdays, 12:00-1:00 p.m.
April 23-May 21
Room 264, University Health Center

Increase energy, motivation and enthusiasm for life! Heighten self-confidence and learn habits for becoming physically and mentally fit including nutrition, cooking and exercise tips.

Delicious Cooking and Nutritious Eating

Wednesdays, 4:30-6:00 p.m.
April 29-May 20
Health Center Cafeteria

Spice up your day! Add variety to your breakfast, lunch, dinner, desserts and snacks. Learn what's nutritious, how to cook it and then eat your results.

Activities Workshop

Thursdays, 4:00-5:30 p.m.
April 23-May 14
Meet in front of the Health Center on 13th Ave.

Ready to learn some fun activities for the spring and summer months ahead? Join us for an introduction to yoga, rock climbing, rollerblading, self defense and even white water rafting. Cost will be reasonable.

CLIP & SAVE...

UNIVERSITY
HEALTH CENTER
We're a matter of degrees

Hours: Mon., and Wed.-Sat: 8am to 6pm
Tuesday: 9am to 6pm, Sunday: 10am to 6pm

Phone...

Appointments: 346-2770
Dental: 346-4432
Pharmacy: 346-4454
Physical Therapy: 346-4401
Insurance: 346-3702
Urgent Care: 346-2770
Women's Clinic: 346-4449
Health Education: 346-4456
Peer Health: 346-4456
General: 346-4441

On-line:

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/uoshc/>