

HEALTH

Study Finds Higher HPV Risks

Human papillomavirus infection tends to last longer in college-aged black women than whites, possibly setting them up for a higher risk of cervical cancer, according to a new study.

The researchers also found that black women are 70 percent more likely to have an abnormal Pap test -- the screening for cervical cancer -- than their white counterparts. Human papillomavirus, or HPV, which is a sexually transmitted infection, can cause genital warts and is responsible for many cases of cervical cancer.

"African American women are more likely to have persistent high-risk HPV infection," said study author Kim Creek, vice-chair and professor of pharmaceutical and biomedical sciences at South Carolina College of Pharmacy, in Charleston.

Most HPV infections are transient. "If you are infected, your body recognizes it as a viral infection and usually clears the virus within one or two years," he said. "It is those women who have difficulty clearing it that are at higher risk of cervical disease and cervical cancer."

Exactly why black women have more difficulty clearing the virus is not known. "We think that it likely has something to do with the immune system," he said.

Hormone Therapy gets Red Flag

(AP) — New research suggests that long-term use of any type of hormones to ease menopause symptoms can raise a woman's risk of breast cancer.

It is already known that taking pills that combine estrogen and progestin — the most common type of hormone therapy — can increase breast cancer risk. But women who no longer have a uterus can take estrogen alone, which was thought to be safe and possibly even slightly beneficial in terms of cancer risk.

The new study suggests otherwise, if the pills are used for many years. It tracked the health of about 60,000 nurses and found that use of any kind of hormones for 10 years or more slightly raised the chances of developing breast cancer.

The hormone picture has been confusing, and the absolute risk of breast cancer for any woman taking hormone pills remains small. Doctors say women should use the lowest dose needed for the shortest time possible.

Grandparent Calls Out for Support

A local African-American woman who has waged more than a decade-long battle to obtain custody of her grandchildren who are under the supervision of the state Department of Human Services is calling out for community support.

Carolynn F. Smith is the chief executive officer and president of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, a non-profit she started in 2000 after her grandchildren were removed from her daughter's custody due to alleged child neglect.

Five of the daughter's seven children were placed in Smith's home, but two others were not.

"I've tried on several occasions in contacting DHS as well as Child Protective Services and to date continue to have my questions go unanswered in getting my grandchildren home where they belong," Smith said.

Her organization will host a community meeting on Monday, April 9 at 6:30 p.m. at the Ockley Green School auditorium, 6031 N. Montana. You can get more information by calling 503-309-2146, 503-285-6312 or visiting grgchildren.org.



Carolynn Smith continues a fight for custody of her grandchildren.

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