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January is Cervical Health Awareness Month

The Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance and the Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD) are joining the nation in observing January as Cervical Health Awareness Month. It's a time to raise awareness about cervical cancer, Human Papillomavirus (HPV) disease, and the importance of getting screened. GTCHD is reminding residents that cervical cancer is nearly 100% preventable with recommended vaccinations and routine screening.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI); 85% of people will get an HPV infection in their lifetime. HPV is a known cause of cervical cancer, as well as some anal cancer, throat cancer, and genital warts.

With the availability of the HPV vaccine, we can protect against the virus that causes more than 90% of cervical cancers. An HPV test can also detect the presence of this virus before cancer develops. By regular screening with a Pap test (alone or in conjunction with an HPV test), your provider can detect precancerous conditions in the cervix, or detect cancer in early stages. When cervical cancer is found early, it is treatable and associated with a good quality of life.

"With the use of HPV vaccination and routine screening, cervical cancer could be prevented," said GTCHD Disease Prevention Supervisor Beverly Morrison, BSN, RN. "Here at Grand Traverse County Health Department, our team of skilled providers work diligently to help provide routine cervical screening and knowledgeable nursing that can help HPV administration."

The vaccine is recommended for individuals aged nine to 26 years. If your teen has not received the vaccine yet, talk to their doctor about getting it as soon as possible. It's highly effective when given as recommended and before exposure to this common virus.

GTCHD provides free to low-cost services through the [Michigan Breast and Cervical Cancer Control and Navigation Program \(BC3NP\)](#), for those who are eligible. If you need cervical cancer screening or have an abnormal mammogram or Pap test and your insurance does not completely pay for additional tests, visit their website for qualification guidelines or contact our Reproductive Health team at 231-995-6113.

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