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Contact:
Sarah Peterson
651.646.8233
sarah@megaphonepr.com

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month

Clinic Sofia reminds women to ensure they are up to date on screenings for cervical cancer.

MINNEAPOLIS (Jan. 19, 2016) — How much do you actually know about the cervix? If you're like most women, probably not much. [Clinic Sofia](#), a local OBGYN clinic known for empowering women to be advocates for their own health, encourages women to get to know more about their cervix and ensure they are up to date on screenings during Cervical Health Awareness Month in January.

The cervix is the lower part of the uterus that connects into the vagina. Cervical cancer screenings or Pap tests can detect changes in the cervix or abnormal cells before they turn into cancer, which is why regular screenings are so important. The HPV or human papilloma virus vaccine can also work to prevent cervical cancer. Clinic Sofia supports women through all life stages and encourages patients to be proactive about their health and wellness.

"If your New Year's resolution has anything to do with your health, then your cervix should be a part of it," said Dr. Donna Block, founder of Clinic Sofia in Edina and Maple Grove. "Cervical cancer screenings can literally save your life and the Affordable Care Act ensures that these screenings are covered. It's also important that your pre-teens receive the HPV vaccine, and this is a great time of year to make a resolution and do something positive and powerful for your health."

Previously, cervical cancer was one of the most common cancers – and most common causes of cancer-related death – for women in the United States. Cervical cancer deaths have decreased by more than 50 percent over the past 30 years thanks to increased screenings, according to the American Cancer Society. The United States Congress designated January as Cervical Health Awareness Month to highlight issues related to cervical cancer.

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“The great news is that screenings don’t require a lot of time or difficulty. When you receive a Pap test, you can also talk to your doctor about any other health-related issues or anything on your mind,” Dr. Block added. “We are always happy to answer questions and help women achieve their health and wellness goals.”

What You Need to Know about Cervical Health:

- 1) **Cervical cancer is known as a silent killer for a reason.** Early stage cervical cancer rarely includes any identifiable symptoms. When the cancer spreads into nearby tissue, then women might face abnormal vaginal bleeding, unusual discharge, bleeding after menopause or pain during intercourse. Even though these symptoms can be caused by other issues, if you are noticing them, see your doctor right away.
- 2) **HPV is the main cause of cervical cancer.** At some point, most people have been infected with at least one type of HPV, the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States, although it rarely causes symptoms and usually goes away on its own. However, in about five percent of women, a serious infection occurs, which can lead to cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine is given in three doses.
- 3) **Pap smear guidelines have changed.** The United States Preventative Services Task Force recommends that women ages 21 to 65 receive a Pap smear every three years, however, women over the age of 30 can go as long as five years if they receive a HPV or human papillomavirus test at the same time and both tests are normal. Women ages 65 and up who have had three negative Pap smears in a row and who aren’t considered at risk no longer need the screening.

In addition, Dr. Block encourages women to:

- **Be proactive about your health.** “Whether it’s your cervical health or your mental health, resolve to take really good care of yourself this year and you will enjoy the benefits for years and years to come,” she added.
- **Talk to your children about HPV.** It’s never too early to discuss safe practices and never too early to create an open door policy for your kids. The Centers for Disease Control recommends the inoculations starting at age 11.
- **Make 2016 a happy and healthy year.** A combination of fun and self-care can help women of all ages ensure a great year and many more to come.

About Clinic Sofia

Clinic Sofia, a leading OB-GYN clinic with locations in Edina and Maple Grove, provides full-circle healthcare for women. The clinic’s name is inspired by the Greek goddess Sophia, who is a symbol of women’s wisdom, life stages, fertility, monthly cycles and nurturing. Staffed completely by women, Clinic Sofia uses the intuitive arts of observation, listening and communication in addition to the medical expertise in the areas of obstetrics and gynecology to meet the complete health needs of women. For more information, please visit www.clinicsofia.com

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