Peppier Paps

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The fact that female HIVers are much more likely to have abnormal Pap smears than their neggie sisters has long raised fears that they may be sitting ducks for cervical cancer. But now it looks like HAART may offer a big bonus: a heartier, healthier cervix. Researchers examined 50 women with HIV at the University of Rochester's AIDS Center in the era before widespread protease-inhibitor use (23 women were on therapy, but only two on HAART), and found that 26 percent had Pap abnormalities. By comparison, in 128 women followed during the HAART era (74 receiving treatment; 54 of those on HAART), only 12.5 percent had abnormal Paps. It's likely that HAART-heightened overall immune function improves the body's control over the human papillomavirus, the cervical cancer-causing culprit.

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