23% of Positive Women Are Not Getting Tested for Cervical Cancer

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Despite being at greater risk for cervical cancer, nearly one in four HIV-positive women in the United States has not had a Pap smear to detect cervical cancer in the past year, Reuters reports.

Despite advances in HIV medication since the introduction of highly active antiretroviral therapy, HIV-positive women remain at risk for developing cervical cancer, “highlighting the continued importance of cervical cancer screening in this population,” health officials from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention write in the August 1 edition of the *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*.

According to the article, Alexandra M. Oster, MD, and her colleagues analyzed data from 2,417 HIV-positive women from 18 states to see if cervical cancer screening guidelines for positive women were being met. Oster and her team found that 23 percent of women interviewed had not gotten a Pap test in the year before the interview.

It is important to remember, the researchers write, that positive women are at higher risk of infection with human papillomavirus (HPV), a cause of cervical cancer. They are also at higher risk for abnormal Pap test findings. “Thus, cervical cancer screening should be a high priority,” the investigators conclude.

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