



New Screening Options for HPV

At-home tests for human papillomavirus may be on the horizon.

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Women will soon have easier—and more private—options to screen for human papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that causes almost all cases of cervical cancer as well as anal cancer, some oral cancers and other malignancies. Women with HIV are at higher risk for cervical cancer and anal cancer.

Two self-collection methods have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that allow women to use vaginal swabs to gather samples in a health care setting, such as their primary care doctor's office, a pharmacy or an urgent care facility. Those samples are then sent to a lab for evaluation.

The FDA has approved self-collection methods of screening for HPV by Roche and by BD (Becton, Dickinson and Company), reports The Washington Post.

What's more, an at-home collection method by Teal Health may receive FDA approval later this year, according to the newspaper.

The newly approved HPV self-collection solutions offer a convenient screening option for people who may have limited access to preventive cancer care; what's more, they are much less intrusive than Pap smears.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) applauded the FDA approvals. "Almost all cervical cancers are caused by persistent infection with certain types of HPV," ACS CEO Karen Knudsen, MBA, PhD, said in a news release. "Self-collection can expand access to screening and reduces barriers, which will give more people the opportunity to detect, treat and ultimately survive cancer."

"Despite the benefits of cervical cancer screening, not all women and people with a cervix get screened regularly," added William Dahut, MD, chief scientific officer at ACS. "Most cervical

cancers are found in people who have never had a cervical cancer screening test or who have not had one recently. That's why adding self-collection in a health care center as a screening method for this potentially deadly disease can make a huge impact."

Early detection and treatment of cervical cancer increases the likelihood of long-term survival.

Despite the benefits of cervical cancer screening, many people do not participate in routine screening. In fact, more than half of people diagnosed with cervical cancer in the United States have never been screened or have only been screened infrequently, according to the National Cancer Institute.

Barriers to screening include limited care, cost and modesty.