



Pap smear needed even with HPV vaccine

HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccines that are often recommended to help prevent infections related to cervical and other cancers should not discourage women from also getting a Pap smear, UT Southwestern Medical Center cancer experts said.

“Women should continue to be screened even if they have undergone HPV vaccination. The vaccine does not target all types of HPV that cause cancer. It is intended to reduce the risk of cancer, but has not been proven to eliminate the need for screening,” explains Dr. Jayanthi Lea.

Unless you have a history of precancerous lesions, cancer, immune deficiency, or other risks, testing every three years between ages 21 and 65 is sufficient, Dr. Lea said. “There is also the option of combining a Pap test with HPV testing for women over age 30. Screening this way is typically performed every five years.”