

HEALTHY Perspectives

WOMEN'S CARE PHYSICIANS & SURGEONS



Women's Care
PHYSICIANS & SURGEONS
598 E. 13th Avenue
Eugene, OR 97401

Cervical Cancer Vaccine Now Available

A vaccine to prevent cervical cancer, precancerous genital lesions and genital warts due to human papillomavirus (HPV) is now available. The vaccine is highly effective against four types of HPV, including two that are responsible for about 70 percent of cervical cancer.

According to Women's Care physician Audrey Garrett, MD, MPH, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have recommended that, in order to obtain full benefit from the vaccination, girls and women should be vaccinated before they become sexually active, i.e., before they're exposed to the viruses. However, since girls and women may obtain some benefit even after they have become sexually active, the CDC recommends the vaccination for girls and women age 13 to 26.

"This vaccine represents a historic milestone in women's health," says Dr. Garrett. "Those who have not acquired HPV would get the full benefits of the vaccine." She notes that on average, there are 500,000 new cases of cervical cancer in the world each year. In the U.S. there are an average of 10,000 new cases and 4,000 deaths from cervical cancer annually.

Dr. Garrett suggests that adult women speak to pediatricians about vaccinations for their daughters and to their gynecologist or primary care physician about the vaccination for themselves.

More information about the CDC's recommendations is available at www.cdc.gov.

Breast Cancer Awareness Events Planned in October

Remember, the three essentials to good breast health are monthly self-breast exams, an annual mammogram and a clinical breast exam. In observance of national breast cancer awareness month and because of our commitment to good breast health for the women we serve, Women's Care will participate in three free events to educate women on good breast health in October. We hope to see you there!

- Monday, Oct. 2, 7 p.m., reception and presentation at Face It!, a cosmetics boutique and service provider, located at 285 E. Fifth Ave., across from Fifth Street Market in Eugene. Paula Jewett, MD, and Miffy Davis, RN, of Women's Care will present information about breast health and related issues, and Davis will demonstrate breast self-exams on a life-sized breast model. Face It! will provide a free make-up demonstration and a 10 percent discount on all purchases. Champagne and dessert will be served.
- Tuesday, Oct. 3, 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., in the Willamette Room of Valley River Inn, 1000 Valley River Way, Eugene. "Shades of Pink: A Night for Women, Wine & Wellness," will be presented by PacificSource Health Plans. Women's Care physicians and staff will join 50 local exhibitors offering health and wellness information, interactive displays, service demonstrations and prizes.
- Monday, Oct. 23, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., roundtable presentation at the Downtown Athletic Club, 999 Willamette St., Eugene. Paula Jewett, MD, and Miffy Davis, RN, of Women's Care will present information about breast health and related issues, and Davis will demonstrate breast self-exams on a life-sized breast model. Space is limited, so please pre-register at www.WomensCare.com.

598 E. 13th Avenue
541-342-8550

Cristin Babcock, MD
Frederick Green, MD
Robert Jacobson, MD
Paula Jewett, MD
Gary LeClair, MD, LMFT
Catherine York, MD
Susan Trezona, CNM

The Fertility Center of Oregon
590 Country Club Parkway
Suite A
541-683-1559

Douglas Austin, MD
Lesa Hill, MHS, PA-C
Christine Hurst, NP
Jeannie Merrick, RNNP

590 Country Club Parkway
Suite B
541-686-2922

Melissa Edwards, MD
Peter Hatfield, MD
Matthew Haugen, MD
Tina Schnapper, MD
Jennifer Tufariello, MD
Heather York, MD
John York, MD

Northwest Gynecologic
Oncology
1200 Hilyard Ste S510
541-465-3300

Deborah Dotters, MD
Audrey Garrett, MD, MPH

Center for Genetics and
Maternal-Fetal Medicine
1200 Hilyard Ste S510
541-349-7600

Keith Balderston, MD
Vern Katz, MD

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Did You Know?

... that Oregon state law mandates insurance coverage for mammograms and Pap tests for all insurance originating in Oregon? And remember, you don't need a referral from your primary care physician for these tests.

Considering Parenthood As Part of Life Planning



Getting an advanced degree. Pursuing a career. Traveling the world. Solidifying a relationship. Buying a home. These are just a few of the reasons American women are postponing motherhood in record numbers. An estimated 20 percent of them now delay pregnancy until after the age of 35.

While motherhood at an older age has its advantages, including increased financial and emotional readiness, it also presents increased risks, says Women's Care physician Doug Austin, MD. He notes that the quality of a woman's eggs declines with age, and that eggs die off every minute of every day. "As a woman approaches 40 and does many commendable things to stay healthy, feel fit and look youthful, she can't stave off the onset of menopause. Her eggs are still 40 years old. How a woman looks on the outside doesn't represent her on the inside."

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A woman's considerations for motherhood should be worked into her life plan beginning at age 30, and by the age of 35, a concrete plan should be in place.

As a result of declining egg quality, women over age 35 face more pregnancy-related risks than their younger counterparts, including the following:

- Difficulty conceiving
- Multiple births
- Chromosomal abnormalities
- Higher rate of miscarriages
- Obstetrical complications (high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, Cesarean deliveries).

Dr. Austin encourages women to consider their attitudes and desires toward parenting when creating a life plan. "Women have been led to believe they can have it all, including school, career, marriage and parenting," he says. "And although those things are important and the standards of attainment women are trying to achieve are valuable, the sad fact is that they sometimes can't have it all." He says a woman's considerations for motherhood should be worked into her life plan beginning at age 30, and by the age of 35, a concrete plan should be in place.

"Women must consider whether they want children, and if they do, if they'll have an intimate partner or be a single parent or a co-parent," Dr. Austin explains. Sometimes a compromise is necessary, he says. A woman who hasn't found an intimate life partner may want to consider adoption, donor insemination, or co-parenting with someone she likes and respects. "There are many creative arrangements available to women, although the solutions may not be the solutions our parents had," Dr. Austin says.

In conclusion, says Dr. Austin, fertility is a finite possibility. "If they delay, many fertile women will become infertile and require significant levels of care. While they may be successful, being thoughtful and deliberate upfront will alleviate their risk."

Genetics Counseling Helps Women of Advanced Maternal Age Determine Risks

Despite slightly higher risks, a great majority of women who have postponed motherhood until their mid-30s and beyond will have successful pregnancies. But as soon as they become pregnant, it's important for these women to have a thorough medical evaluation with their obstetrician/gynecologist.

At Women's Care, all pregnant patients age 35 and older are offered a consultation with a genetics counselor to discuss their particular risks, if any, for complications. "Our genetics counselor works with a patient to examine how her risk factors affect the pregnancy, and how the pregnancy affects her risks," explains Vern Katz, MD, a perinatologist with the Center for Genetics and Maternal-Fetal Medicine. (Perinatologists are obstetrics subspecialists who care for pregnant women when either the mother or the fetus has a condition that places the pregnancy at risk.)

Dr. Katz explains that as we age, our cells don't divide as well as they once did. In egg cells, this means an increased risk of chromosomal abnormalities. So, as part of their genetics counseling, patients

age 35 and older are offered noninvasive screening procedures such as blood tests and detailed ultrasound to detect genetic abnormalities, including Down syndrome.

More advanced prenatal tests are available for women with specific risk factors. However, because many of these tests are invasive and come with some risks of their own, discussions with a genetics counselor are useful to weigh the pros and cons of each. One such diagnostic test is amniocentesis—a procedure in which a small amount of amniotic fluid is drawn out of the uterus through a needle inserted in the mother's abdomen and is analyzed for genetic abnormalities.

While most women of advanced maternal age will get care from a general Ob/Gyn, sometimes a perinatologist may make evaluations and recommendations to help the Ob/Gyn if complications arise during pregnancy. Some women with certain risk factors may be cared for by a perinatologist. This is especially true for pregnant women in their late 40s, who are at a much higher risk for cardiac problems, blood clots and osteoporosis.

Dr. Katz notes that it's important for any woman who sees a physician for a medical disease—including diabetes, epilepsy, or elevated blood pressure or cholesterol—to talk with her Ob/Gyn before becoming pregnant. "These patients can work with their physicians to monitor medical conditions and to change or adjust medications before conceiving to better insure a healthy pregnancy," he says.

Dr. Katz also advises women of all ages who are trying to conceive to adopt a healthy lifestyle before getting pregnant. "Because the baby is forming in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, healthy changes made before pregnancy are even more important than those made afterwards," he explains.

Here are a few good health habits to maximize chances of a healthy pregnancy:

- Control existing health problems such as high blood pressure or diabetes.
- Take prenatal vitamins that contain folic acid before getting pregnant to help prevent neural tube defects such as spina bifida, a condition in which the



tissue over the baby's spinal cord doesn't close.

- Avoid tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs. All have been linked to poor pregnancy outcomes.
- Drink no more than two cups of coffee a day. More than that has been shown to increase risk of miscarriage.
- Eat a common-sense diet including plenty of fruits and vegetables. Limit intake of fish, which may contain mercury.
- Once pregnant, schedule regular prenatal visits.

"Genetics counselors and perinatologists are good resources to help pregnant women over age 35 explore their individual circumstances and options and make informed decisions," says Dr. Katz.

Women's Care Physicians in the News

Three Women's Care physicians will make presentations to a statewide group of physicians and other health care providers at the Women's Health Care Symposium 2006 sponsored by Sacred Heart Medical Center.



Vern Katz, MD, will provide an overview of upcoming issues in obstetrics and will discuss C-Section on demand.



Doug Austin, MD, will present on estrogen and older women, including the latest developments related to hormone replacement therapy.



Audrey Garrett, MD, MPH, will discuss the new human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.