FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CERVICAL CANCER
Women urged to get a Pap test as part of New Year’s Resolution

INDIANAPOLIS—As Hoosiers begin making positive changes in 2012, state health officials urge women to make getting a Pap test part of any New Year’s resolution to be healthier.

Each year, approximately 12,000 women in the United States get cervical cancer. From 2004 to 2008, 1,291 Hoosier women were diagnosed with cervical cancer and 424 women died of cervical cancer in Indiana.

Cervical cancer used to be the leading cause of cancer death for women in the United States. However, within the past 40 years, the number of deaths has decreased significantly as a large result of women getting regular Pap tests.

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month and highlights the importance of women to have a regular Pap test.

“The beginning stages of cervical cancer usually have no symptoms, but a regular Pap test can diagnose cervical cancer in its early, most treatable stage,” said State Health Commissioner Gregory Larkin, M.D. “This is crucial as 90 percent of cervical cancers are beatable if found early. Physicians can also diagnose precancerous cervical changes that, when treated appropriately, may prevent cancer from ever occurring.”

The American Cancer Society recommends that all women begin having regular Pap tests three years after having sexual intercourse, or no later than age 21. Screening should be done every year. By age 30, many women who have had three normal Pap tests in a row may be advised to screen less often, such as every two to three years. It is important to talk to your doctor to see what is right for you in regard to screening.

The most important risk factor for cervical cancer is exposure to human papilloma virus (HPV). The virus is spread through sexual contact and two high-risk HPV strains (HPV 16 and HPV 18) account for more than 70 percent of all cervical cancer cases, according to the National Cancer Institute.

There are two vaccines, Gardasil and Cervarix, that can help prevent the two most common high-risk types of HPV and are licensed, safe and effective. Talk with your doctor to see if HPV vaccination is right for you and/or your child.

Another high risk factor for cervical cancer is smoking. Women who smoke are about twice as likely as non-smokers to get cervical cancer. To quit smoking or to help someone you care about quit, contact the Indiana Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669).

The Indiana Breast and Cervical Cancer Program provides access to breast and cervical cancer screenings, diagnostic testing, and treatment for underserved and underinsured women who qualify for services. To find out if you qualify for this program, call the Indiana Family Helpline at 1-855-HELP-1ST (1-855-435-7178).

For more information on cervical cancer, visit the Indiana State Department of Health website at www.statehealth.in.gov.

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To make a difference in cancer control in Indiana, go to www.indianacancer.org and become a member of the Indiana Cancer Consortium (ICC). The ICC is a statewide network of public and private organizations whose mission is to reduce the burden of cancer in Indiana through the development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive plan that addresses cancer across the continuum, from prevention through palliation.