

Cervical cancer is preventable and District 751's Women's Committee will be working to get that message out during National Women's Health Week in May.

The week will be observed May 9-15.

More than 4,000 American women die from cervical cancer each year. The cancer is caused by a virus -- the human papillomavirus, commonly called HPV and is the second most common type of cancer that strikes women today. There is a vaccine that stops the most-common forms of the virus, and the virus itself can be detected through common Pap tests during a woman's annual exam.

However, a recent survey found that only 53 percent of Seattle-area women are aware that cervical cancer can be prevented, and 52 percent said they had not had a gynecological or pelvic exam in the past year.

Those figures are shockingly high, and are what prompted the District 751 Women's Committee to get involved with the Pearl of Wisdom campaign to help spread cervical cancer awareness, said Jackie Boschok, who is the union's Health and Benefits Coordinator and chairs this committee.

"Seattle women need to know more about how easy it is to prevent cervical cancer," Boschok said. "It's literally a life-and-death issue, and the steps to ensure life are fairly simple."

The campaign's backers urge women and girls to take action:

- If you or your daughters are between the ages of 9 and 26, talk to your doctor about the HPV vaccine, which protects against the virus.
- If you're 21 or older, get a Pap test, which can detect the abnormal cells that can lead to cervical cancer.
- If you're 30 and older, get the Pap test and HPV test together as part of your routine health screening. The test can show whether you've contracted the virus, thus identifying whether you're at increased risk for cervical cancer and should be monitored more closely.

It's important to have girls vaccinated against HPV, Boschok said, because research shows once young women become sexually active, their odds of contracting the virus skyrocket. But if they're vaccinated against HPV before that, they'll be protected against the virus -- and the cancer it can cause.

"Because it involves sex, it's not always a comfortable thing to talk about," Boschok said. "But the penalty for not talking about it is too high. We need to get girls and young women vaccinated early, and mothers need to take

responsibility for making sure their daughters are protected from cervical cancer.”

As a symbol of the campaign, Women’s Committee members are wearing Pearl of Wisdom pins, which can be purchased for \$6.95 each through the campaign’s Website: [www.PearlofWisdom.us/Seattle](http://www.PearlofWisdom.us/Seattle). All proceeds from pin sales benefit U.S.-based cervical cancer prevention.

People who visit the site also can send e-cards to women they care about with virtual “pearls of wisdom” about cervical cancer prevention.

## MAY WOMEN'S COMMITTEE REPORT

National Women's Health Week -May 9<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> - 2010 is an annual opportunity for women to make their health a priority. This year our Women's Committee is partnering with the Pearl of Wisdom™ Campaign to Prevent Cervical Cancer to help raise awareness about cervical cancer prevention. The good news is that cervical cancer is preventable if every woman knows about and benefits from the tools-the Pap test, the HPV test and the HPV vaccine- that are now available to protect them from this disease.

The bad news is that a recent survey shows that many Seattle women are missing opportunities to benefit from these lifesaving tools. In fact, thousands of women in the United States suffer and die from cervical cancer each year. More than half of those surveyed had not had a pelvic exam in the past year and sadly, only 53% of women in our community believe that cervical cancer can be prevented.

But, the best news is that we can all help prevent cervical cancer! That is why our Women's Committee is wearing Pearl of Wisdom pins and sharing information about this campaign. These pins are union made by the IAM and are available for purchase at the Seattle website [www.PearlofWisdom.us/Seattle](http://www.PearlofWisdom.us/Seattle). All proceeds benefit cervical cancer prevention activities and visitors can send digital pearls to the women in their lives.

Please read the May *Aero Mechanic* article about the Pearl of Wisdom campaign for more information and actions for women and girls to take. Working together, we can beat cervical cancer! Thanks!