Cervical Cancer Screening

Approximately 100 women die of cervical cancer in Tennessee each year. A Pap smear is a microscopic examination of cells scraped from the cervix. Regular Pap tests decrease a woman’s risk for developing and dying from cervical cancer because they can detect precancerous cervical lesions at early, treatable stages. The United States Preventive Services Task Force recommends cervical cancer screening at least every 3 years beginning within 3 years of onset of sexual activity or at age 21 (whichever comes first). Meeting this recommendation is important for increasing the quality and years of healthy life of women in Tennessee.

- In 2005, 86.3% (± 2.4)* of Tennessee women aged 18 and older reported they had a current Pap test (i.e. within the past 3 years). 6.9% (± 1.4) reported they had had a Pap test more than 3 years ago, and 6.9% (± 2.1) reported they had never had a Pap test.

- Between 1997 and 2005, the percentage of women without a current Pap test (i.e. they had never had a Pap test or it had been more than 3 years since the procedure was last done) remained fairly constant at approximately 11-15%.

- The percentage of women without a current Pap test was higher among whites (13.4% ± 2.3) than among blacks (7.1% ± 3.5).

- Young women aged 18-24 years (22.7%) and women 65 years and older (32.3%) had the highest prevalence of individuals without a current Pap test.

- The percentage of women without a current Pap test decreased with increasing level of education, from 27.7% among women with less than a high school education to 5.5% among college graduates.

References:
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/cervical/breast)

Prepared by the Tennessee Department of Health; Office of Policy, Planning and Assessment; Surveillance, Epidemiology and Evaluation section based on 2005 TN Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data.
The percentage of women without a current Pap test decreased with increasing annual household income, from 21.4% among those with an income of less than $15,000 to 4.0% among those with an income of $75,000 or more.

Women without health insurance were more likely than those with health insurance to be without a current Pap test (20.9% vs. 12.5%, respectively).

Similarly, women without a personal doctor or health care provider were more likely to be without a current Pap test than those with such a person (25.5% vs. 11.5%, respectively).

Modifiable risk factors for cervical cancer include smoking and eating a diet low in fruits and vegetables. Among all women aged 18 years and older, 24.4% (± 2.2) were current smokers, and 72.4% (± 2.3) reported eating less than 5 daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

*The number above each column indicates the percent value for that column. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, as do ranges for percentages given in the text.

†Women who reported they had had a hysterectomy were excluded from the analysis.