



## “Cervical Cancer y tu!”

Did you know that cervical cancer is nearly 100 percent preventable? However, some racial and ethnic minorities, new immigrants, and persons of low socioeconomic status still have high incidence and mortality rates due to cervical cancer. Many of the women who are affected by this disease in Los Angeles County are Latina lesbians and bi-sexual women. What many women don't know is that cervical cancer is preventable and curable if detected early.

The [LUNA](#) (Latinas Understanding the Need for Action), a program of [Bienestar](#), program is but one of 175 organizations that are working to address this issue but LUNA is the only program in all of Los Angeles County that specifically addresses the needs of the Latina LBQ community. For the past year now LUNA has been active in helping to battle cervical cancer and raise the level of health and well being amongst Latina lesbian/bisexual and questioning women. LUNA provides valuable support and health and wellness information through a combination of preventative education, cultural pride and sexual celebration. We offer workshops, one-on-one counseling for health related referrals in collaboration with various clinics across Los Angeles LUNA to ensure that Latinas get the medical attention they need.

The LUNA workshops address the factors that inhibit Latina lesbian and bi-sexual women from visiting a health care provider on a yearly basis such as; the lack of health insurance, homophobia, fear, and poverty. Our events such as the monthly cenas and weekly support groups offer LBQ Latinas the opportunity to meet other mujeres and build community in a drug/alcohol free environment.

Guest speakers have included Dr. Vicky Mays of the UCLA WHISPERS project who gave a presentation on the state lesbian health in LA County, Beatrice Gandara spoke on the topic of Latina Mental Health, Dr. Beverly co-founder of the Women's Lifecycle who spoke about how women can become more assertive patients Lastly The Erogenous Zone (a sex positive adult retail store in Fullerton) who did a “show n' tell” about fun and safe ways to use toys in our relationships. So, become parte de nuestra familia because this type of programming is only being offered for a limited time. Para más información sobre nuestros servicios comunicate con Claudia al (323)660-9680 x19

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**More information on Cervical Cancer by [Cancer.gov](#).**

### ***Early Detection***

If all women had pelvic exams and [Pap tests](#) regularly, most precancerous conditions would be detected and treated before cancer develops. That way, most invasive cancers could be prevented. Any invasive cancer that does occur would likely be found at an early, curable stage.

In a pelvic exam, the doctor checks the uterus, vagina, [ovaries](#), [fallopian tubes](#), bladder, and rectum. The doctor feels these organs for any abnormality in their shape or size. A [speculum](#) is used to widen the vagina so that the doctor can see the upper part of the vagina and the cervix.

The Pap test is a simple, painless test to detect abnormal cells in and around the cervix. A woman should have this test when she is not menstruating; the best time is between 10 and 20 days after the first day of her menstrual period. For about 2 days before a Pap test, she should avoid [douching](#) or using spermicidal foams, creams, or jellies or vaginal medicines (except as directed by a physician), which may wash away or hide any abnormal cells.

A Pap test can be done in a doctor's office or a health clinic. A wooden scraper (spatula) and/or a small brush is used to collect a sample of cells from the cervix and upper vagina. The cells are placed on a glass slide and sent to a medical laboratory to be checked for abnormal changes.

The way of describing Pap test results is changing. The newest method is the Bethesda System. Changes are described as low-grade or high-grade SIL. Many doctors believe that the Bethesda System provides more useful information than an older system, which uses numbers ranging from class 1 to class 5. (In class 1, the cells in the sample are normal, while class 5 refers to invasive cancer.) Women should ask their doctor to explain the system used for their Pap test.

Women should have regular checkups, including a pelvic exam and a Pap test, if they are or have been sexually active or if they are age 18 or older. Those who are at increased risk of developing cancer of the cervix should be especially careful to follow their doctor's advice about checkups. (For a discussion of [risk factors](#) for cervical cancer see the [Cause and Prevention](#) section.) Women who have had a [hysterectomy](#) (surgery to remove the uterus, including the cervix) should ask their doctor's advice about having pelvic exams and Pap tests.

## **Symptoms**

Precancerous changes of the cervix usually do **not** cause pain. In fact, they generally do not cause any symptoms and are not detected unless a woman has a pelvic exam and a Pap test.

Symptoms usually do not appear until abnormal cervical cells become cancerous and invade nearby tissue. When this happens, the most common symptom is abnormal bleeding. Bleeding may start and stop between regular menstrual periods, or it may occur after sexual intercourse, douching, or a pelvic exam. Menstrual bleeding may last longer and be heavier than usual. Bleeding after [menopause](#) also may be a symptom of cervical cancer. Increased vaginal discharge is another symptom of cervical cancer.

These symptoms may be caused by cancer or by other health problems. Only a doctor can tell for sure. It is important for a woman to see her doctor if she is having any of these symptoms.