

Cervical cancer cream covered

Profmed, the medical scheme for graduate professionals, has taken the view that prevention is better than cure, and covers the cervical cancer vaccine for women out of their day-to-day benefits.



According to The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA), one woman out of every 31 is diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 3400 women die of cervical cancer every year in South Africa.

"We have taken the approach that prevention for all is better than one incidence of cancer and one death for our members," says Graham Anderson, Profmed's principal officer.

The human papilloma virus (HPV) is the primary cause of cervical cancer, accounting for around 80% of incidences. This is an extremely common sexually transmitted infection, with an estimate of between 60% to 80% of sexually active people being infected.

Prevention better than cure

Although cervical cancer is treatable in its early stages if it is detected by a regular PAP smear, prevention is still better than cure. "With 3400 women dying from cervical cancer each year, it's clear that further intervention is necessary to prevent rather than treat the condition," says Anderson.

The vaccine is not cheap and requires three doses for immunisation to occur. Women who have had the vaccine must remember that it only prevents a certain percentage of HPV infections, so they should still have their annual PAP smears to detect any other types that may have taken hold. Profmed also covers the cost of the liquid-based cytology (LBC) test from risk. LBC is the latest technology in detecting cervical cancer.

Early sexual activity, multiple sexual partners and smoking all increase a woman's risk of developing cervical cancer.

