

- Staying active. Gentle exercise is good for you and your baby
- Avoiding caffeine (coffee, soda and tea)
- Avoiding chemicals (like bug sprays or household cleaners)
- Taking a pre-natal class
- Taking a multivitamin with folic acid

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**For more information about women's health exams on the Internet, please visit:**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
www.cdc.gov

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
www.womenshealth.gov

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health  
www.omhrc.gov

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**  
riht@uscridc.org  
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants  
1717 Massachusetts Ave., NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: 202 • 347 • 3507  
Fax: 202 • 347 • 7177  
www.refugees.org

**For more information by phone please call:**

The National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC)  
1-800-994-9662

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America at  
1-800-230-7526

**To find clinics in your area where you can get free and low cost Pap tests and mammograms, please visit:**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
www.cdc.gov/cancer

Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
www.plannedparenthood.org

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*Information for this brochure was adapted from materials developed by:*

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*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*

*The National Cancer Institute*

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Photo credit: Rose McNulty

**Routine Health Exams for Women**



**www.refugees.org**  
*Protecting Refugees, Serving Immigrants,  
Upholding Freedom since 1911*

## PAP TEST

The Pap test, also called a Pap smear, is a routine medical exam in which the doctor or nurse uses a small brush to take a sample of cells from the cervix. While you may experience a bit of discomfort, this simple test helps diagnose potentially life-threatening cervical cancer. All women over the age of 18 should have a Pap test once a year. If a woman has become sexually active before age 18, she should have a yearly Pap test.

During an annual Pap test, you will be asked to remove all clothing from your lower body and to lie back on a table. Your feet will be raised. The doctor or nurse will sit between your legs with a light and medical tools.

You can ask to have an extra nurse in the room with you. The doctor or nurse will look at your genital area, feel inside, and perform the Pap test. This is necessary to make sure your vagina and cervix are healthy.

To get the most accurate test, for three days before going in for a Pap test you should not:

- Douche\*
- Use tampons
- Use vaginal creams, suppositories, or medicines
- Use vaginal deodorant sprays or powders
- Have sex

*\* Most doctors suggest that women avoid douching altogether. The female body cleans itself naturally, so douching may cause or worsen infections. Douching may also increase your risk for sexually transmitted disease. Douching does NOT prevent pregnancy.*

## BREAST EXAMS

Lumps in a woman's breast may be a sign of a serious and potentially life-threatening illness. A woman should have her breasts examined by a doctor or nurse every year when she goes for her annual exam. Her breasts will be examined for lumps, dimples, or redness by a nurse or doctor.

Every woman should also examine her own breasts for lumps, dimples, redness, discharge from the nipples, or other changes each month. Some lumps are normal, but it is best to have a doctor or nurse check any new or growing lumps in your breast. It is important to examine your breasts monthly to know what your breasts are normally like and to check for any changes.

## MAMMOGRAMS

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast used to check for cancer. Women after age forty should get a mammogram every one to two years.

During a mammogram, the doctor or nurse places your breast between two plates. The machine then closes to get a clear picture of your breast. You may experience discomfort but the procedure only lasts about one minute. Breast exams and mammograms are essential for the early detection of breast cancer.

## PRE-NATAL CARE

Pre-natal care is the medical care that you and your baby receive while you are pregnant. Pre-natal care is important to help you have a healthy baby. Every pregnant woman should receive early and regular pre-natal care.

It is also important to follow the doctor's directions, which may include:

- Eating lots of fruits and vegetables
- Avoiding smoking, alcohol, and drugs

