

REDBOOK handbook:

ADVICE, ANSWERS, AND HEALTH NEWS YOU CAN USE.

BREAKING NEWS ON CERVICAL CANCER

This just in: The test for human papillomavirus (HPV)—the leading cause of cervical cancer—can be up to 40 percent more accurate than a Pap test in detecting your risk for the disease, according to a recent study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. **While a Pap can identify existing precancerous cells in the cervix, the HPV test detects the actual infection that may progress to precancer in the future,** says Debbie Saslow, Ph.D., director of breast and gynecologic cancer at the American Cancer Society. The caveat: Since most HPV infections *don't* turn into cervical cancer—especially those contracted before age 30, when your immune system is more likely to beat the infection on its own—there is concern that women who do test positive for HPV may be sent for additional testing procedures that they don't actually need. For women over 30, however, the American Cancer Society and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend asking your doctor about getting both a Pap and an HPV test, since cervical cancer is usually completely curable if caught early. To learn more about the HPV test, visit thehpvtest.com and talk to your doctor.
—Cristina González

YOUR HEALTH

“Does it matter
if my doctor
is board
certified?”

A It sure does. A board-certified doctor is more likely to keep up-to-date with the latest medical information in her field and to provide high-quality care.

Why? **Board certification requires that**

a doctor pursue special training beyond medical school and residency, take courses within her specialty throughout her career, and pass performance exams every seven to 10 years.

This is true for your general practitioner, who should be certified in family medicine, and other specialists, says Stephen H. Miller, M.D., former president of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS).

Doctors also need to maintain an unrestricted license (meaning it's never been revoked or suspended) to remain board certified. Although certification by ABMS is a voluntary process, 85 percent of U.S. physicians opt to get it. To check on your doctor's board-certification status, visit abms.org or call 866-ASK-ABMS.

—Nicole Yorio

NOT ALL CAFFEINE IS CREATED EQUAL

When you need a caffeine fix, choose carefully. While there's no link between long-term coffee consumption (of up to about four cups a day) and high blood pressure, according to a review of the Nurses' Health Study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the same can't be said for cola. Researchers found that consuming at least four cans of sugared cola daily led to a 28 percent to 44 percent increased risk of high blood pressure (diet cola followed closely behind risk-wise), which can up your odds of having congestive heart failure, heart disease, or a stroke. The antioxidants found in coffee may counteract the blood pressure-raising effect of caffeine, says Wolfgang C. Winkelmayr, M.D., an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School and lead author of the study. **Bottom line: Experts aren't recommending that you kick the can habit entirely, but do limit your intake to one to two cans a day for your heart's sake.** —Stella Katsipoutis

GOT A HEALTH QUESTION?

Email it to us at
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