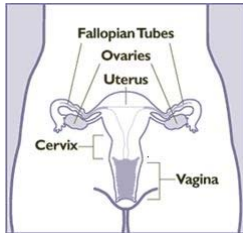


Fact Sheet

HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV)



What is HPV?

HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) is an infection with a virus that is common in the United States and around the world. HPV can cause cancer and genital warts. HPV is spread through sexual contact. There are about 100 types of HPV. HPV is the major cause of cervical cancer in women and is also associated with several other types of cancer in both men and women.

How common is HPV?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. At least 50 percent of sexually active people will get HPV at some time in their lives. Every year in the U.S., about 6.2 million people get HPV. HPV is most common in young women and men who are in their late teens and early 20s.

Can HPV be treated?

There is no treatment for HPV. But there are treatments for the health problems that HPV can cause.

What is the HPV vaccine?

The vaccine, brand named Gardasil, is the first vaccine developed to prevent cervical cancer, genital lesions that may lead to cancer, and genital warts due to HPV.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

The vaccine is recommended for the usual vaccination of girls 11-12 years of age. The recommendation also allows for girls beginning at nine years old, as well as girls and women 13-26 years old, to receive this vaccine.

How and when is the vaccine given?

The vaccine is given in a series of three shots over a six-month period. The second and third shots should be given at two and six months after the first shot. HPV vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines. There is no need for any testing before you get vaccinated.

Is the HPV vaccine effective?

This vaccine is highly effective in preventing four types of HPV in young women who have not been previously exposed to HPV. This vaccine targets HPV types that cause

up to 70% of all cervical cancers and about 90% of genital warts. The vaccine will not treat existing HPV infections or their complications.

Is the HPV vaccine safe?

In 2006, the FDA licensed the vaccine as safe and effective. This vaccine has been tested in thousands of females (9 to 26 years of age) around the world. These studies have shown no serious side effects. The most common side effect is brief soreness at the shot site (arm). They will continue monitoring the vaccine to be sure it is safe and effective.

How long does the vaccine protection last? Will a booster shot be needed?

The length of vaccine protection is usually not known when a vaccine is first introduced. So far, studies have found that vaccinated persons are protected for at least five years. More research is being done to find out how long protection will last, and if another shot will be needed.

Will females be protected against HPV and related diseases, even if they don't get all three shots?

It is not yet known how much protection girls/women would get from receiving only one or two shots of the vaccine. For this reason, it is very important that girls/women get all three shots of the vaccine.

Will the girls/women who have been vaccinated still need cervical cancer screening (Pap smear)?

Yes, they will still need to see their healthcare provider for cervical cancer screening. The vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV infections that cause cervical cancer.

Why is the vaccine only recommended for girls/women ages 9-26?

The vaccine has been tested in 9-26 year-old females so information is only available about vaccine safety and protection for girls/women of this age group. However, studies on the vaccine are now being done in boys/men, as well as in women older than 26 years of age. The FDA will consider licensing the vaccine for these other groups when there is research to show that it is safe and effective in these groups.

Should pregnant women be vaccinated?

The vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women. There is limited information about vaccine safety in this group. However, other vaccines of this type are not known to pose a risk to pregnant women and their unborn. So far, studies suggest that the vaccine has not caused health problems during pregnancy, nor has it caused health problems for the child. But more research is still needed. For now, pregnant women should wait to complete their pregnancy before getting the vaccine. If a woman finds out she is pregnant after she has started getting the vaccine series, she should wait until after her pregnancy is completed to finish the three-shot series.

What about vaccinating males? We do not yet know if the vaccine is effective in boys or men. Studies are now being done to find out if the vaccine works to prevent HPV infection and disease in males. When more information is available, this vaccine may be licensed and recommended for boys/men as well.

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