



HPV Vaccine Project

Vaccinate today. Protect her tomorrow.

Frequently Asked Questions about HPV and the HPV Vaccine

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.

Is HPV a sexually transmitted disease?

HPV is a common virus that can be passed on through skin-to-skin contact in the genital area. There are about 40 types of HPV that can infect the genital areas of men and women, most often during sex. Most sexually active people will get HPV at some time in their lives, though most will never even know it and can pass it on to their sex partners without realizing it. Most HPV types cause no symptoms and go away on their own. But some types can cause cervical cancer in women and other less common genital cancers. Other types of HPV can cause warts in the genital areas of men and women.

What if my daughter is NOT sexually active, should she still get the HPV vaccine?

Yes. Doctors recommend that girls get the vaccine prior to sexual contact before they could be exposed to the HPV virus. The vaccine will not only protect her now but also when she's older.

Will giving the HPV vaccine to my daughter encourage her to have sex?

The decision to have sex by adolescents is based on multiple influences by family, peers, and even school and community factors. It is rarely related to a single factor, such as risk of HPV infection. Various studies suggest that increased unsafe behaviors as a result of the HPV vaccine are unlikely.

At what age should my daughter get the HPV vaccine?

The vaccine is most effective if received before girls become sexually active. For the best protection against the HPV virus, doctors recommend vaccinating girls who are 11 and 12 years old. The vaccine has been approved for girls and women up to the age of 26 and as young as 9.

How has the HPV vaccine been tested?

The safety of this vaccine was studied in 5 clinical trials before it was licensed. There were over 21,000 girls and women ages 9 through 26 in the clinical trials. Over 23 million doses of the HPV vaccine have been distributed in the United States and studies have shown no serious side effects. The HPV vaccine has been widely studied in thousands of girls and women in the U.S. and around the world and like all vaccines its safety continues to be monitored by CDC and the FDA.

What are the side effects of the HPV vaccine?

The most common side effect is brief soreness in the arm where the shot is given. Mild problems that may occur with the HPV vaccine are: redness, swelling, pain or itching at the injection site or mild to moderate fever. These symptoms do not last long and go away on their own.

There have been some reports of fainting in teens after they got the vaccine. Fainting is common after injections, especially in pre-teens and teens. To help prevent injuries from falls, the CDC and FDA recommend that girls should sit or lie down for 15 minutes after receiving the HPV vaccine, or any other vaccine.



How common is cervical cancer?

The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2009 more than 11,000 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer and approximately 4,070 will die from it in the U.S. In several counties in south central North Carolina, cervical cancer rates are higher than the state average.

Does the HPV vaccine really prevent cervical cancer?

The vaccine is very effective. It prevents infection with four types of HPV in young women who have not been previously exposed to these types of HPV. Gardasil® targets HPV types that cause up to 70% of all cervical cancers and about 90% of genital warts. Several studies showed that in women who had not already been infected, Gardasil® was nearly 100 percent effective in preventing precancerous cervical lesions, precancerous vaginal and vulvar lesions, and genital warts caused by infection with the HPV types against which the vaccine is directed.

What does the vaccine not protect against?

The vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV— so it will not prevent all cases of cervical cancer. About 30% of cervical cancers will not be prevented by the vaccine, so it will be important for women to continue getting screened for cervical cancer (regular Pap tests). Also, the vaccine does not prevent other sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy.

How many shots will my daughter need?

Three injections are given over six months. The second shot is given two months after the first shot, and the third shot is given four months later. The best protection requires having all three shots. HPV vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Where can I go to get my daughter the HPV vaccine?

The local health department and several other providers in your county offer HPV vaccine for girls with and without health insurance. Contact your daughter's doctor to see if they offer the HPV vaccine and to schedule an appointment. You can also visit your local health department where no appointment is needed.

How much will the HPV vaccine cost me?

The HPV vaccine is free or available at a low cost for your daughter if she is age 9-18 years old and meets ANY of these qualifications:

- **Medicaid Eligible:** a child who is eligible or enrolled in the Medicaid program
- **Uninsured:** a child who has no medical insurance coverage
- **American Indian or Alaskan Native**
- **Underinsured:** children whose insurance plans do not fully cover the cost of vaccines (independent of co-pays, deductibles, and administration fees)
- **Unaccompanied Minor without Proof of Insurance:** applies only to those presenting at a local health department Title X (family planning) clinic

If she has private health insurance, your daughter's doctor or health care provider can help you learn more about her coverage and if up-front payment is required.

Information sources for this document include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), American Cancer Society, NC Central Cancer Registry, and the NC Division of Public Health.

For a more comprehensive list of FAQs visit www.HPVvaccineproject.org

