



HPV Vaccine

What is HPV (human papillomavirus) & the HPV vaccine?

HPV is a common virus that can cause genital warts and cancer. HPV affects all people regardless of gender and causes cervical, vulvar, anal, penile, mouth and throat cancers. HPV is most commonly spread by sexual intercourse, but can be spread by other forms of intimacy as well. Most cases are acquired soon after individuals have sex for the first time. Up to 80% of people will get an HPV infection during their lifetime.

In 2006, the first HPV vaccine, Gardasil, was introduced and approved for use in the United States. This vaccine prevents cervical cancer and genital warts due to the most common HPV types that lead to these diseases. In 2014, a newer vaccine, Gardasil 9 was approved for use. This vaccine prevents diseases caused by even more HPV viruses. The HPV vaccines are approved for use and recommended in both the U.S. and Canada.

How is the vaccine given?

If the vaccine is started in teens age 14 or younger, then they should receive 2 doses of the vaccine 6 months apart. If the vaccine is started at age 15 or older, then the vaccine is given as 3 doses over 6 months.

Age	Dose #1	Dose #2	Dose #3
<15	Today	In 6 months	N/A
15-26	Today	In 1-2 months	In 6 months

The HPV vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines. If the vaccine schedule is interrupted, the vaccination series does not have to be restarted, just completed. If you started a series with the original Gardasil, it is fine to complete the series with Gardasil 9.

Who should receive the HPV vaccine?

The ideal age to receive the HPV vaccine is 11-12 years old. However, the vaccine is approved for use in individuals between ages 9-45 years.

The HPV vaccine is not just for females; people of any gender can receive this vaccine.

How Effective is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccines are extremely effective in preventing the four (Gardasil) and nine (Gardasil 9) types of HPV infection in adolescents who have not been previously exposed. The vaccine targets the types of HPV that causes the majority of cervical cancers and nearly all types of genital warts. Unfortunately, this vaccine will not treat HPV infection that is already present or its complications. It is important to get the vaccine before a person initiates any sexual relationships. However, the vaccine is still recommended in those who have already had sex.

This vaccine covers the most common types of HPV but does not provide protection against all types of HPV. It is not known how effective the protection against HPV will be if you do not receive all of the recommended doses of the vaccine.

Even if you receive all of the recommended doses of the vaccine, it is still possible to get genital warts and/or abnormal cells that can eventually lead to cervical cancer. You still need to get pap smears (cervical cancer screening) as an adult, even if you have received the vaccine.

Is the HPV vaccine safe?

The HPV vaccine is safe. Nearly 60 million doses of HPV vaccine have been given and there is no data to suggest that there are any severe side effects or adverse reactions linked to vaccination. The HPV vaccination has been carefully and extensively studied. Vaccines do not cause autism spectrum disorder. Adolescents who receive the HPV vaccine do not engage in riskier sexual behavior. HPV vaccination is recommended because the benefits, such as prevention of cancer, far outweigh the risks of possible side effects.

Health decisions are personal, and each person should make choices that are right for themselves and their families. It is important to remember that choosing not to vaccinate is not a risk-free choice—HPV vaccines prevent serious cancers and other diseases.

How can I learn more?

CDC website:

www.cdc.gov/std/hpv

Immunization action coalition:

www.vaccineinformation.org/hpv

Society of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists
of Canada HPV website:

www.hpvinfos.ca

Canadian Public Health website:

[www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/
diseases/human-papillomavirus-hpv.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/human-papillomavirus-hpv.html)