

HPV Vaccine is All About Cancer Prevention*



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Why subject a child to a series of shots when he or she is not sexually active?

For this vaccine to work, we need to protect children before their first sexual encounter. *And, getting the shot at age 11 or 12 means a better immune response than seen in adults.* Which means greater protection. Which means less cancer.

It's long been known that HPV is responsible for nearly all cases of cervical cancer in women.

HPV is a virus that spreads from skin-to-skin, person-to-person. Often this occurs during sexual contact but can also be passed from mother to child. Many people who have HPV don't even realize it, meaning they continue to pass the infection to others. That's why some 6 million people are infected every year with HPV. And while HPV causes warts on the genitals, that's not what bothers physicians about it. What bothers us is that HPV causes cancer.

The good news is there's a vaccine that can protect us from the most common strains of HPV that cause cancer.

It is recommended that girls between the ages of 11 and 12 receive 3 doses of the vaccine. As of 2011, this was extended to include the routine vaccination of boys. Why? Because while nearly 12,000 women a year are diagnosed in the US with cervical cancer and about 4,000 die annually from the disease, about 7,000 males are also diagnosed every year with an HPV-related cancer. HPV is a known cause of penile, anal, and mouth and throat cancers in men.

The HPV vaccine has had a good safety record and has been shown to be very effective in preventing HPV infections. According to a study reported by the



photo by James Gathary

CDC, the incidence of human papillomavirus has decreased among teenage girls by 56%, despite being available since only 2006. From June 2006 to March 2013, approximately 57 million doses of HPV vaccines were distributed and 22,000 adverse events were self-reported. Ninety-two percent were classified as "non-serious" events, such as pain, redness, swelling, fainting, dizziness, nausea, headache, fever and hives. Among the reports coded as "serious,": headache, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, dizziness, fainting, and generalized weakness are the most frequently reported symptoms.

If you have questions about the HPV vaccine, talk to your doctor so that all of your questions can be answered.

For more information:

www.cdc.gov/hpv/

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/vac-faqs.htm

The vaccine does not treat HPV disease, but rather prevents it, so the vaccine needs to be given to adolescents prior to any exposure to the virus.

*This includes information from www.shotofprevention.com (January 24, 2013) by Dr. Lara Zibners, in recognition of Cervical Cancer Awareness Month