The HPV Vaccine

What Parents of Preteens and Teens Need to Know

What is HPV?

HPV (human papillomavirus) is a virus that is spread through sexual contact. There are many different types of HPV. Some types can cause cervical cancer in women. Each year about 12,000 women in the U.S. get cervical cancer and about 4,000 women die from it.

Other types of HPV can cause genital warts and anal cancer in both females and males. HPV is so common that most adults get it at some point in their lives. Most never know they have it. HPV is most common in young people in their late teens and early 20s.

What is HPV vaccine?

Two HPV vaccines are available to protect against HPV types that cause most cervical cancer – Cervarix and Gardasil. One HPV vaccine (Gardasil) also protects against HPV types that cause most genital warts and the HPV types that cause cancers of the vulva, vagina, and anus.

Who should get HPV vaccine?

Doctors recommend this vaccine for 11 and 12 year old girls. Girls and young women ages 13 through 26 should also get the vaccine if they have not started or finished the vaccine series.

One of the HPV vaccines (Gardasil) is also licensed, safe, and effective for males ages 9 through 26 years. Boys and young men may choose to get this vaccine to prevent genital warts and anal cancer.

Why is HPV vaccine recommended for 11 and 12 year olds?

For the HPV vaccine to work best, it is very important to get all 3 shots before first sexual contact. This is important because the vaccine prevents HPV infection in females and males who have not yet been exposed to the HPV types covered by the vaccine. Someone can be infected with HPV the very first time they have sexual contact with another person. It is possible to get HPV even if sexual contact only happens one time.

Are HPV vaccines safe and effective?

Both HPV vaccines have been studied in thousands of people in the U.S. and around the world, and serious side effects are rare. The most common side effect is soreness in the area of the arm where the shot is given. When all 3 doses are received, HPV vaccine is very effective against the types of HPV that are included in the vaccine. No studies so far have shown whether or not 1 or 2 shots protect as well as getting 3 shots, so it is very important to get all 3 shots.

How much does the vaccine cost?

American Indian/Alaska Native children younger than 19 years of age can get shots for free through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. All IHS, tribal and urban Indian health clinics offer shots through the VFC program. So do many private doctors. Check with your doctor or your local clinic.

For more information on vaccines, ask your child's healthcare provider or call **800-CDC-INFO** (800-232-4636)
Website: **www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens/**

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