

What Parents Should Know about **HPV** and the **HPV Vaccine**

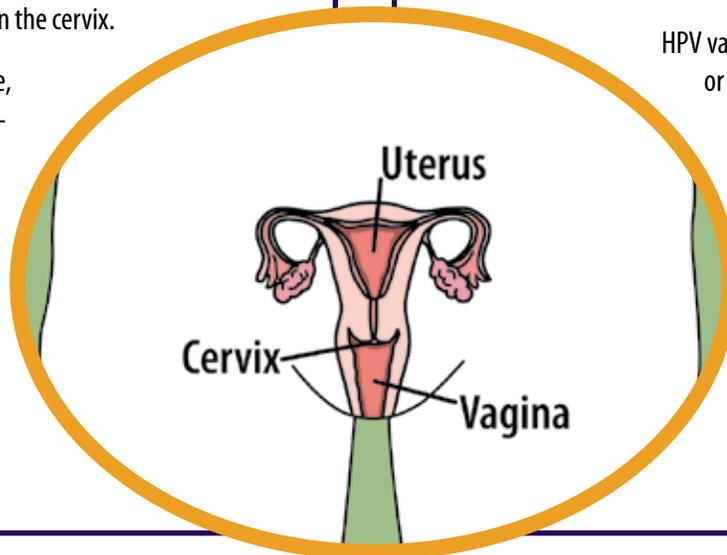
About the Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

HPV is a virus. There are many types of HPV. Most people will come in contact with HPV during their lives. HPV is spread to the genital area, including the cervix, through skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity. The cervix is the opening of the uterus (see the figure).

Most of the time, HPV goes away on its own and causes no symptoms. When HPV does not go away, it can cause warts on the genitals or abnormal cells in the cervix.

A Pap test is a test done by a nurse, doctor, or midwife to check for abnormal cells in the cervix. When abnormal cells are found with a Pap test and treated, they usually don't turn into cancer of the cervix (cervical cancer).

Cervical cancer is rare but serious. It can be life-threatening.



The HPV Vaccine and Your Daughter

HPV can be prevented by a vaccine (an injection, or shot). The HPV vaccine protects against four common types of HPV. Two of these types of HPV cause most cases (70%) of cervical cancer, and the other two types cause most cases (90%) of genital warts.

The vaccine is approved for young women and men ages 9–26 years old.

HPV vaccination does not treat or cure HPV. It gives the best protection to young women and men when given before the start of sexual activity, when they have not yet been exposed to HPV. The vaccine produces the best level of protection against HPV when given at ages 9–15 years old.

- Have regular Pap tests starting at age 21. Pap tests are important because the HPV vaccine does not prevent all types of cervical cancer. Regular Pap tests can show whether the cervix has abnormal cells; if so, these cells can be treated before they turn into cancer.
- Delay the start of sexual activity.
- Use condoms to help decrease the chance of getting and spreading HPV.
- Have relationships in which each partner is faithful—that is, neither partner has any kind of sexual activity with anyone else.
- Don't smoke cigarettes or quit smoking, because smoking can make the cells of the cervix more likely to grow abnormally.

Frequently Asked Questions about the HPV Vaccine

How is the HPV vaccine given?

Three injections are given over 6 months. The second is given 2 months after the first. The third is given 4 months after the second. It is important to get all three shots.

Is the HPV vaccine safe?

The vaccine was studied in thousands of girls and women from ages 9 to 26 years old before it was approved by the FDA (the Food and Drug Administration) in 2006 as both safe and effective.

What are the side effects?

Soreness at the site of the injection is the most common side effect.

How long will the vaccine protect against HPV?

So far, the vaccine has been shown to protect up to 6 years. As with any new vaccine, ongoing research will tell us more.

Who should not get the vaccine?

Those who are pregnant or allergic to any of the ingredients of the vaccine should not get the vaccine.

Does the vaccine protect against other viruses?

No, it only protects against HPV. HPV is not the same as herpes or HIV — two other infections caused by viruses.

Can boys be vaccinated?

Yes, the vaccine is available for young men ages 9 to 26 to protect against genital warts.

Where to Get More Information

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV-vaccine.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/preteens-adol/hpvfacts-qa.htm>