

HPV Vaccine Questions & Answers

In June of 2006, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) approved the first vaccine developed to prevent cervical cancer, genital warts, and other diseases caused by certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV). The vaccine, Gardasil®, protects against four HPV types, which together cause 70% of cervical cancers and 90% of genital warts.

The Basics About HPV and Cervical Cancer

- At least 50% of sexually active people will contract HPV at some time in their lives. Currently, 24.9 million women ages 14-59 have HPV.
- Over 70% of all cervical cancer is caused by HPV strains 16 and 18.
- About 90% of all genital warts cases are caused by HPV strains 6 and 11, along with strains 16 and 18.
- There is no treatment for HPV. But there are treatments for the health problems that HPV can cause, such as genital warts, cervical cell changes, and cancers of the cervix, vulva, vagina and anus.
- Some types of HPV can infect a woman's cervix and cause the cells to change. Most of the time, HPV goes away on its own. But sometimes, HPV continues to change the cells on the woman's cervix which can lead to cancer over time, if they are not treated.
- The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2006, over 9,700 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer and 3,700 women will die from this cancer in the U.S.
- There is an estimated cost of \$146.4 million a year to treat cervical cancer.

The Basics of the HPV Vaccine

- The HPV Vaccine was recommended by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to be given through a series of three shots over a 6-month period. The second and third doses should be given 2 and 6 months (respectively) after the first dose.
- The vaccine will NOT protect against all types of HPV that cause cervical cancer, so women will still need regular cervical cancer screening.

Who Should Get the Vaccine

- The HPV vaccine is recommended for 11-12 year-old girls, and can be given to girls as young as 9. The vaccine is also recommended for 13-26 year-old girls/women who have not yet received the vaccine series.
- Ideally, females should get the vaccine before they are sexually active. This is because the vaccine is most effective in girls/women who have not yet been exposed to any of the four HPV types covered by the vaccine.
- Females who are sexually active may also benefit from the vaccine. But they may get less benefit from the vaccine since they may have already acquired one or more HPV type(s) covered by the vaccine.

Safety of HPV Vaccine

- The HPV vaccine has been tested in over 11,000 females (9-26 years of age) in many countries around the world, including the United States (U.S).
- These studies found that the HPV vaccine was safe and caused no serious side effects. Adverse events were mainly injection site pain. This reaction was common but mild.
- The CDC has indicated that all reported adverse reactions to the vaccine thus far have been mild.

Cost and Coverage of the HPV Vaccine

- The retail price is \$120 per dose (\$360 for full series).
- **INSURANCE PLANS:** While some insurance companies may cover the vaccine, others may not. Most large insurance plans usually cover the costs of vaccines recommended by the CDC's ACIP. However, there is often a short lag-time after a vaccine is recommended, before it is available and covered by health plans.
- **GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS:** The *Vaccines for Children (VFC)* Program will provide free vaccines to children and adolescents between the ages of 9 and 18, who are either: uninsured, Medicaid eligible, American Indian, or Alaska Native. There are over 45,000 sites that provide VFC vaccines, including hospitals, private clinics and public clinics. The VFC Program also allows children and teens to get VFC vaccines through Federally Qualified Health Centers or Rural Health Centers, if their private health insurance does not cover the vaccine. For more information, visit: www.cdc.gov/nip/vfc.
- **MERCK ASSISTANCE:** Currently, there is a vaccine assistance program funded by Merck. For women 19-26, who do not have Medicaid or other insurance, providers can submit a two page application (by fax) and ask Merck to pay the cost of the vaccine. For more information, visit: www.merck.com/merckhelps/vaccines.
- A cost-benefit analysis concluded that vaccination of girls against high-risk HPV subtypes would be cost effective given certain parameters if all 12-year-old girls currently living in the U.S. were vaccinated, more than 1,300 deaths from cervical cancer could be prevented.

Legislative Efforts Around the HPV Vaccine

- There are no federal laws requiring immunization of children with HPV vaccine. Each state decides whether or not to require vaccinations for enrollment in childcare or school attendance.
- Legislators in at least 37 states and D.C. have introduced legislation to require, fund or educate the public about the HPV Vaccine.

For More Information, Please Visit:

CDC HPV Information
www.cdc.gov/std/hpv

American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

American Social Health Association (ASHA)
www.ashastd.org

Gardasil Website
www.gardasil.com