

HPV Vaccine

What is it and should I get it?

Hello parents and students. I have received a few calls in regards to HPV (Human Papillomavirus), and it's vaccine, so here is the straight scoop. If you are female ages 11-26 you can receive the HPV vaccine. It is recommended by the ACIP (advisory committee on immunization practices) a group that advises the CDC (centers for disease control and prevention).

Does it seem that 11 is too young to vaccinate your daughter against 4 types of HPV? And why are only 4 viruses covered by the vaccination? Eleven may seem young, but ideally vaccination should take place before she becomes sexually active. This eliminates possibilities of exposure to HPV prior to being vaccinated. The vaccine will not treat any existing HPV infections and it was found to be less effective in young women who were already exposed to HPV. The vaccine covers 4 of the 40 types of HPV, these four cause about 70% of cervical cancers and 90% of genital warts. So, middle school/high school age is not too young to prevent a potential exposure to cervical cancer or genital warts.

Is the vaccine safe and how much does it cost?

At this time the FDA has licensed the vaccine as safe and effective. There have been no serious side effects reported as of June 2006. The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site.

After calling several agencies and researching on the web, not all insurance companies cover this vaccination. The cost ranges from 100.00-120.00 per injection. This is a series of three injections given at 2-month intervals over a six-month period.

What else should I know?

At least 50% of sexually active people will get HPV. The infection can occur in the cervix and change the cells. Most of the time the infection goes away on it's own, but sometimes it persists and continues to change the cervical cells (these are "precancers") and can lead to cancer if left untreated. It is important to be screened. What I mean by screened is have a pap test as recommended by your physician.

Are there other ways to prevent cervical cancer and HPV?

As I said above regular pap tests and follow-ups can prevent most cervical cancers. A pap test can detect a cervical cancer at an early and curable stage.

ABSTINENCE is the only sure way to prevent HPV. Sexually active adults can reduce their risk by being in a mutually exclusive relationship. But, even so all bets can be off if your partner was sexually active before they were with you. Condoms may help reduce the risk of HPV but a condom covers not all areas. Condoms do reduce the risk of HIV and other STI's when used properly.

Any questions?



<http://www.cdc.gov>