

What You Need To Know

What is HPV?

Genital human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted virus in the United States.

There are about 40 types of HPV. About 20 million people in the U.S. are infected, and about 6.2 million more get infected each year. HPV is spread through sexual contact.

Most HPV infections don't cause any symptoms, and go away on their own. But HPV is important mainly because it can cause cervical cancer in women. Every year in the U.S. about 10,000 women get cervical cancer and 2,700 die from it. It is the 2nd leading cause of cancer deaths among women around the world.

HPV is also associated with several less common types of cancer in both men and women. It can also cause genital warts and warts in the upper respiratory tract.

More than 50% of sexually active men and women are infected with HPV at sometime in their lives.

There is no treatment for HPV infection, but the conditions it causes can be treated.

HPV Vaccine - Why get vaccinated?

HPV vaccine is an inactivated (not live) vaccine which protects against 4 major types of HPV.

These include 2 types that cause about 70% of cervical cancer and 2 types that cause about 90% of genital warts. HPV vaccine can prevent most genital warts and most cases of cervical cancer.

Protection from HPV vaccine is expected to be long-lasting. But vaccinated women still need cervical cancer screening because the vaccine does not protect against all HPV types that cause cervical cancer.

Who should get HPV vaccine and when?

Routine Vaccination

- HPV vaccine is routinely recommended for girls 11-12 years of age. Doctors may give it girls as young as 9 years.

Why is HPV vaccine given to girls at this age?

It is important for girls to get HPV vaccine before their first sexual contact - because they have not been exposed to HPV. For these girls, the vaccine can prevent almost 100% of disease caused by the 4 types of HPV targeted by the vaccine.

However, if a girl or woman is already infected with a type of HPV, the vaccine will not prevent disease from that type.

Catch-Up Vaccination

The vaccine is also recommended for girls and women 13-26 years of age who did not receive it when they were younger.

HPV vaccine is given as a 3-dose series:

1st dose: Now

2nd dose: 2 months after Dose 1

3rd dose: 6 months after Dose 1

Additional (booster) doses are not recommended.

HPV vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Some girls or women should not get HPV vaccine or should wait

Anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to yeast, to any other component of HPV vaccine, or to a previous dose of HPV vaccine should not get the vaccine. Tell your doctor if the person getting the vaccine has any severe allergies.

Pregnant women should not get the vaccine. The vaccine appears to be safe, for both the mother and the unborn baby, but it is still being studied. Receiving HPV vaccine when pregnant is not a reason to consider terminating the pregnancy. Women who are breastfeeding may safely get the vaccine.

Any women who learns that she was pregnant when she got HPV vaccine is encouraged to call the HPV vaccine in pregnancy registry at 800-986-8999. Information from this registry will help us learn how pregnant women respond to the vaccine.

People who are mildly ill when the shot is scheduled can still get HPV vaccine. People with moderate to severe illnesses should wait until they recover.

What are the risks from HPV vaccine?

HPV vaccine does not appear to cause any serious side effects.

However, a vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of any vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

Several mild problems may occur with HPV vaccine:

- Pain at the injection site (about 8 in 10)
- Redness or swelling at the injection site (about 1 person in 4)
- Mild fever (100 degrees F) (about 1 person in 10)
- Itching at the injection site (about 1 person in 30)
- Moderate fever (102 degrees F) (about 1 person in 65)

These symptoms do not last long and go away on their own.

Life-threatening allergic reactions from vaccines are very rare. If they do occur, it would be within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

Like all vaccines, HPV vaccine will continue to be monitored for unusual or severe problems.

What if there is a severe reaction?

What should I look for?

Any unusual condition, such as a high fever or behavior changes. Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heart beat or dizziness.

What should I do?

Call a doctor, or get the person to a doctor right away.

Tell your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.

Ask your doctor, nurse, or health department to report the reaction by filing a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form.

Or you can file this report through the VAERS website at www.vaers.hhs.gov, or by calling 1-800-822-7967. (VAERS does not provide medical advice.)

How can I learn more?

Ask your doctor or nurse. They can show you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information. Or call your local or state health department. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) can also be contacted at 1-800-232-4636 or at www.cdc.gov/std/hpv and www.cdc.gov/nip