

The human papilloma virus (HPV) can cause genital warts, pre-cancerous lesions, and cancer. The HPV vaccine is effective at helping prevent these problems and is recommended for girls and women ages 9 to 26.

What is HPV?

- HPV is a DNA virus that can infect human skin and mucous membranes.
- There are more than 100 different viral subtypes and many are harmless.
- Some HPV types cause foot (1) and hand (2) warts.
- Other viral types (6, 11) cause genital warts (condyloma). HPV types 16, 18, 31, 33, 35 may cause pre-cancerous lesions or cancer.

Transmission of HPV

- The HPV virus is very contagious and is transmitted through physical contact, usually unprotected sexual activity.
- Many infected with HPV do not have symptoms, but the virus can still be spread through physical contact.

HPV and Cancer

Changes in the cervix are often caused by a virus called human papilloma virus (HPV). Early exposure to HPV can lead to cervical cancer years later.

Problems from HPV

- Infection with HPV can result in genital warts (condyloma), pre-cancerous lesions (dysplasia), and cancer of the genital tract.
- Smoking increases the risk of these cancers.

The HPV Vaccine

- The current HPV vaccine only protects against HPV types 6, 11, 16, and 18. There are other HPV types that are not included in the vaccine that can cause disease.
- The vaccine is most effective when administered before the onset of sexual activity.
- The US FDA has approved the vaccine for girls and women ages 9 to 26. The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that girls routinely receive the vaccine between the ages of 11 and 12.
- Vaccination is recommended for all women up to age 26, regardless of sexual activity, but may be less

effective if there has been prior HPV exposure.

- Patients with suppressed immune systems can be vaccinated, although the protection may be less than for those with healthy immune systems.
- The HPV vaccine is not recommended during pregnancy but can be safely administered to the breast-feeding mother.
- The HPV vaccine is not a form of treatment for HPV infection.

What Can We Do?

- Encourage females ages 9 to 26 to ask about the HPV vaccine.
- Continue with cervical cytology (the Pap smear or Thin Prep) as recommended by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG).
- Be aware if you are infected but have no symptoms you can still spread HPV.

Additional Information

Consult your primary care physician.

American Cancer Society
Lexington, KY
(859) 276-3223

American College of Obstetrics and
Gynecology
www.acog.org

Cancer Information Service
(to answer questions or send brochures)
(859) 219-9063
1-800-4CANCER

Lexington-Fayette County
Health Department
(859) 252-2371
www.lexingtonhealthdepartment.org

National Cancer Information Center
1-800-ACS-2345
www.cancer.org

US Dept. of Health and
Human Resources,
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
1-866-441-NCHS
www.cdc.gov



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Vaccination for HPV

