

# Human Papillomavirus

## A Parent's Guide to Preteen and Teen HPV Vaccination



# HPV

### Why vaccinate against HPV at 11 or 12 years of age?

- ▶ The vaccine produces better immunity to fight infection when given at younger ages compared with older ages.
- ▶ Vaccination for HPV is much more effective at preventing disease and cancer if all three doses are administered before someone's first sexual contact.
- ▶ Most American men and women who become sexually active will contract at least one type of HPV virus in their lifetime. Vaccination can reduce their risk of HPV infection.
- ▶ Most people who become infected with HPV do not even know it.
- ▶ HPV is easily spread by skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity. Even if someone does not have sexual intercourse, they can still get HPV.
- ▶ People who choose to have only one lifetime sex partner can still get HPV if their partner has had previous partners who were infected.
- ▶ Both vaccines have been tested in thousands of people around the world and have been proven to have no serious side effects.
- ▶ Both vaccines are highly effective against HPV types that cause most cervical cancers; one of the vaccines, Gardasil, also protects against 90 percent of HPV-associated genital warts.

### What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common family of viruses that causes infection of the skin or mucous membranes of various areas of the body. There are over 100 different types of HPV viruses. Different types of HPV infection affect different areas of the body. For instance, some types of HPV cause warts in the genital area and other types can lead to abnormal cells on the cervix, vulva, anus, penis, mouth, and throat, sometimes leading to cancer.

### How common is HPV?

HPV is very common. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most sexually active American men and women will contract at least one type of HPV virus during their lifetime. HPV is considered the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States. It is the cause of almost all cervical cancers in women and has been linked to the rise of oral cancers in young people in the United States.

### How serious is HPV?

HPV is extremely serious. Approximately 79 million Americans are currently infected with HPV, and about 14 million more become infected each year. In the United States, there are around 12,000 new cervical cancer cases diagnosed annually, and 4,000 women die from cervical cancer every year. Men are affected too. Around 9,000 HPV-associated cancer cases occur in American men each year.

### How is HPV spread?

The most common ways to get an HPV infection is from vaginal or anal sex with an infected person; however, this is NOT the only way to get HPV. Infection can also be acquired from oral sex and any skin-to-skin contact with areas infected by HPV. It is possible to have HPV and not know it, so a person can unknowingly spread HPV to another person.

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Technical content reviewed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## Resources for more information

- ▶ Your healthcare provider or local health department
- ▶ CDC's information on vaccines and immunization: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)
- ▶ Immunization Action Coalition's vaccine information website: [www.vaccineinformation.org](http://www.vaccineinformation.org)
- ▶ Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: [www.chop.edu/vaccine](http://www.chop.edu/vaccine)
- ▶ CDC's Vaccines For Children (VFC) program: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/index.html)

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Related press release: [www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2013/p0619-hpv-vaccinations.html](http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2013/p0619-hpv-vaccinations.html)

**Talk to your health-care provider today about protecting your son or daughter from HPV infection!**

## Can HPV infection be treated?

There is no treatment for HPV infection; there are only treatments available for the health problems that HPV can cause, such as genital warts, cervical changes, and cancer. In some cases, the body fights off the virus naturally. In cases where the virus cannot be fought off naturally, the person is at risk for serious complications, including cancer.

## What is HPV vaccine?

There are two HPV vaccines licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and recommended by CDC: Cervarix and Gardasil. Both vaccines protect against cervical cancers in women. One vaccine, Gardasil, also protects against genital warts and cancers of the anus, vagina, and vulva. Both vaccines are available for females. Only Gardasil is available for males. HPV vaccines are given in three shots over six months; it is important to get all three doses to get the best protection.

## At what age should my son or daughter get HPV vaccine?

Routine vaccination with three doses of HPV vaccine is recommended for all 11- and 12-year-old boys and girls. The vaccines can be given as early as 9 years of age. If your son or daughter did not receive the three doses of vaccine at the recommended age, they should still start or complete their HPV vaccine series. Your son can be given the vaccine through the age of 21 (and also certain males through age 26 years), and your daughter can be given the vaccine through the age of 26. Check with your healthcare provider to make sure your child is up to date with HPV vaccination.

For HPV vaccine to work best, it is very important for preteens to get all three doses before any sexual activity begins. It is possible to get infected with HPV the very first time they have sexual contact with another person, even if they do not have intercourse. Also, the vaccine produces better immunity to fight infection when given at the younger ages compared to the older ages.

## Are HPV vaccines safe?

HPV vaccines have been shown to be very safe. Every vaccine used in the United States is required to go through rigorous safety testing before licensure by the FDA. Both HPV vaccines have been extensively tested in clinical trials with more than 28,000 male and female participants. Since the first HPV vaccine was licensed for use in 2006, more than 50 million doses of HPV vaccine have been distributed in the United States. Now in routine use, these vaccines are continually monitored for safety.

In the years of HPV vaccine safety monitoring, no serious safety concerns have been identified. Like other vaccinations, most side effects from HPV vaccination are mild, including fever, headache, and pain and redness in the arm where the shot was given.

## Are HPV vaccines effective?

The vaccines have been shown to be highly effective in protecting against the HPV types targeted by the vaccines. A study looking at HPV infections in girls and women before and after the introduction of HPV vaccines shows a significant reduction in vaccine-type HPV in U.S. teens since the vaccine was introduced.

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