

## **HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS INFECTION & VACCINE AWARENESS**

The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted virus in the United States with about 79 million Americans currently infected and about 14 million new infections each year in the U.S. HPV is a group of more than 150 related viruses and more than 40 HPV types can infect the genital areas of males and females.

Both male and female who are sexually active can contract HPV and are unaware of the infection since most HPV infections cause no symptoms. However, the virus remains in the system long-term in up to 20% of individuals infected with it and can cause serious health problems including genital warts and cancers. In fact, 5% of all cancers in the U.S. are attributable to HPV.

HPV is so common that nearly all sexually active individuals get it at some point in their lives. Awareness of HPV is important, mainly because when it persists in females it can lead to cervical cancer, the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women around the world. Cancer often takes years, even decades, to develop after a person gets HPV. The types of HPV that can cause genital warts are not the same as the types of HPV that can cause cancers. There is no treatment for HPV infection, but the conditions it causes can often be successfully treated.

### **PREVENTION OF HPV INFECTION**

The only way to eliminate the risk of HPV infection and/or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) is to refrain from any genital contact with another individual.

The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has approved two vaccines to prevent HPV infection. Both vaccines are safe and effective in preventing HPV infection in both male and female recipients. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, and Director of the Center for Disease Control, oversee the vaccine.

The HPV vaccine is an inactive (not live) vaccine. Protection from HPV vaccine is expected to be long-lasting.

### **HPV VACCINE ADMINISTRATION**

HPV vaccines offer the best protection to girls and boys who receive all three recommended vaccine doses over six months and have time to develop an immune response before becoming sexually active. Therefore, HPV vaccination is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for preteen girls and boys at age 11 or 12 years. The vaccine can be initiated as early as age 9. Catch-up vaccination, for those not previously vaccinated, can be administered until age 21 for males and age 26 for females.

For girls who receive the HPV vaccine before they are sexually active, the vaccine can prevent almost 100% of cervical disease caused by the four types of HPV targeted by the vaccine. (Without the vaccine, more than 11,000 women in the United States get cervical cancer each year.)

## **SIDE EFFECTS OF THE VACCINE**

Most of the side effects from the HPV vaccine are minor. They may include swelling or pain at the site of the shot, or feeling faint immediately after getting the vaccine. As with other vaccines there is a small chance of an allergic reaction.

## **SCREENING**

There are HPV tests that can be used to screen for cervical HPV infection. These tests are recommended for screening only in women aged 30 years and older. They are not recommended to screen men, adolescents, or women under the age of 30 years.

## **RESOURCES TO CONTACT & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Center for Disease Control & Prevent – HPV Vaccines for boys and Girls (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/downloads/dis-hpv-color-office.pdf>)
- CDC: Are Your Kids Protected From HPV-Related Cancers? (<http://www.cdc.gov/features/hpvvaccine/>)
- Frequently Asked Questions About HPV Vaccines (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/vac-fags.htm>)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/hpv/vaccine.html>)
- Centers for Disease Control and prevention – “You are the Key to Cancer Prevention” Campaign (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/who/teens/for-hap/hpv-resources.html>)
- Kids Health ([http://kidshealth.org/teen/sexual\\_health/stds/hpv-vaccine.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/sexual_health/stds/hpv-vaccine.html))
- American Cancer Society ([www.cancer.org/hpv-faq-pdf](http://www.cancer.org/hpv-faq-pdf))
- American Academy of Pediatrics (<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2012/02/22/peds.2011-3865.full.pdf>)