

WHAT ARE HPV AND CERVICAL CANCER?

The human papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common virus. Most people will get HPV at some point in their lives. Although most HPV infections are cleared by one's immune system, some strains of HPV can cause cell changes in a woman's cervix. These changes, if left untreated, can lead to cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer is cancer in the part of the uterus that opens to the vagina, called the cervix, and can be prevented.

HPV VACCINES

Two companies have developed vaccines targeting the highest-risk strains of HPV (16 and 18), which cause about 70 percent of cervical cancers.¹ On June 8, 2006, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved one HPV vaccine. The vaccine is approved for girls and young women aged 9 to 26, and preferably before the onset of sexual activity, to get full protection.

HPV vaccines are preventive. This means the vaccine will be most effective in girls and women who have not been exposed to the HPV virus. The FDA-approved vaccine protects against four types of HPV; HPV types 16 and 18, which cause 70 percent of cervical cancers and HPV types 6 and 11, which cause 90 percent of genital warts.

¹"HPV Vaccine Questions and Answers," www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/STDFact-HPV-Vaccine.htm, CDC, 7/7/2006

ABOUT WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

Women In Government is a national 501(c)(3), non-profit, bi-partisan organization of women state legislators providing leadership opportunities, networking, expert forums, and educational resources to address and resolve complex public policy issues.

ABOUT THE HPV & CERVICAL CANCER POLICY RESOURCE CENTER

In 2004, Women In Government launched the *Challenge to Eliminate Cervical Cancer Campaign*. The Campaign supports state legislators' efforts to improve public education about cervical cancer and HPV to help ensure that all women have access to the most advanced and appropriate prevention technologies and strategies available.

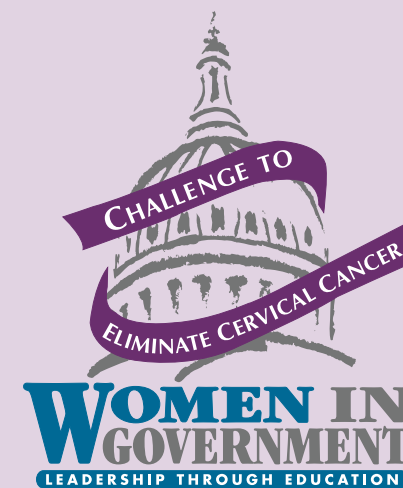
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HPV VACCINES



WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

HOW CAN YOU GET THE VACCINE?

The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends routine HPV vaccination for girls aged 11 and 12, as young as 9 year olds, as well as providing the vaccine to all other FDA-approved age groups.

The FDA-approved HPV vaccine is given three times over a six-month period. The second and third doses are given at two and six months after the first dose.

The second HPV vaccine under development is on a 0, 1 and 6 month schedule.

The ACIP encourages adolescent wellness visits and checkups to include the recommended vaccination. The ACIP also issued a resolution for the HPV vaccine to be included in the federal Vaccines For Children (VFC) program. The VFC program is a federal entitlement, and gives free vaccines for uninsured and underinsured children beginning at age 0 through age 18.

Many health plans and public programs, including Medicaid, will cover the cost of ACIP recommended vaccines. Local health clinics may also provide the vaccine. Please check with your insurance provider and state laws for the most current information related to coverage.

SCREENING CONTINUES TO BE IMPORTANT

An HPV vaccine should be part of a comprehensive strategy to prevent cervical cancer. There are two reasons why women will still need regular cervical cancer screening, including Pap and HPV testing:

1. The vaccine does not protect against all of the HPV strains that can cause cervical cancer. The FDA-approved HPV vaccine protects women from high-risk HPV strains 16 and 18, which account for 70 percent of cervical cancers. Screening will need to be continued to ensure women are protected against the remaining high-risk HPV types which cause 30 percent of cervical cancers, and are not covered by the vaccine.
2. Some women have already been exposed to HPV and/or will not receive the vaccine.

The long-term duration of vaccine protection is still unknown. The FDA-approved vaccine is 100 percent effective in preventing cervical pre-cancers caused by HPV types 16 and 18 in clinical trials and triggers an immune response for at least five years.

HPV vaccines will go a long way to preventing this disease by reducing the number of women with two of the most common high-risk HPV types. While more research is being done to find out how long the protection lasts, screening will remain important for even those who are vaccinated.

IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

How common are HPV and Cervical Cancer?

Approximately 80 percent of women will have had genital HPV by age 50 and about 6.2 million people get HPV per year.¹ The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2006, approximately 9,700 American women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 3,700 women will die from it.¹

What are the current screening options?

The Pap test detects changes in the cells in the cervix before they turn into cancer. The HPV test checks directly for high-risk HPV types that can lead to cervical cancer. HPV testing helps your doctor know if you are at increased risk for developing cervical cancer. It is FDA-approved for use with a Pap test in screening women age 30 and older and for women of all ages as follow-up on inconclusive Pap test results. Both the Pap and HPV tests use a small, soft brush to collect cervical cells to be examined under a microscope.

If I am sexually active or already have HPV, will I still benefit from the vaccine?

Women who are already infected with HPV may also benefit from the vaccine. Since few women are infected with all four HPV types (6, 11, 16, 18) included in the vaccine, most women will still be partially protected by the vaccine.

What about men?

Research is currently being done to see whether the vaccine is safe and beneficial for men.

¹"HPV Vaccine Questions and Answers," www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/STDFact-HPV-Vaccine.htm, CDC, 7/7/2006