

What is the HPV vaccine?

The vaccine, Gardasil, is the first vaccine developed to prevent cervical cancer, precancerous genital lesions, and genital warts due to HPV.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

CDC recommends the HPV vaccine for all 11 and 12 year old girls. The recommendation allows for vaccination to begin at age nine. Vaccination also is recommended for females aged 13 through 26 years who have not been previously vaccinated or who have not completed the full series of shots.

Are there other HPV vaccines in development?

Another HPV vaccine (being developed by GlaxoSmithKline) is in the final stages of clinical testing, but it is not yet licensed. This vaccine would protect against the two types of HPV that cause most cervical cancers.

How and when is the vaccine delivered?

The vaccine is given in a series of three injections over a six-month period. The second and third doses should be given at two and six months (respectively) after the first dose. HPV vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Is the HPV vaccine effective?

This vaccine is highly effective in preventing four types of HPV in young women who have not been previously exposed to HPV. This vaccine targets HPV types that cause up to 70% of all cervical cancers and about 90% of genital warts. The vaccine will not treat existing HPV infections or their complications.

Is the HPV vaccine safe?

The FDA has licensed the vaccine as safe and effective. This vaccine has been tested in thousands of females (9 to 26 years of age) around the world. These studies have shown no serious side effects. The most common side effect is brief soreness at the injection site. CDC, working with the FDA, will continue to monitor the safety of the vaccine after it is in general use.

Does the vaccine contain thimerosal or mercury?

No, there is no thimerosal or mercury in the vaccine.

How long does vaccine protection last? Will a booster shot be needed?

The length of vaccine protection (immunity) is usually not known when a vaccine is first introduced. So far, studies have found that vaccinated persons are protected for five years. More research is being done to find out how long protection will last, and if a booster dose of vaccine will be needed.

Will girls/women be protected against HPV and related diseases, even if they don't get all three doses?

It is not yet known how much protection girls/women would get from receiving only one or two doses of the vaccine. For this reason, it is very important that girls/women get all three doses of the vaccine.

If a woman turns 27 years of age after the first dose of HPV was administered but before the third dose is administered, should the series be completed?

Yes, the series should be completed using the recommended intervals between doses, even if this means that the series is completed after a woman turns 27 years of age.

Does the vaccine protect against cervical cancer?

Yes, HPV vaccine is the first vaccine developed to prevent cervical cancer. This new vaccine is highly effective in preventing HPV infection, the major cause of cervical cancer in women. The vaccine protects against four types of HPV, including two that cause about 70% of cervical cancer.

How common is cervical cancer?

The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2007, over 11,000 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer and approximately 3,600 women will die from this disease.

Will the girls/women who have been vaccinated still need cervical cancer screening?

Yes, they will still need to see their healthcare provider for cervical cancer screening. There are three reasons why women will still need regular cervical cancer screening. First, the vaccine will NOT provide protection against all types of HPV that cause cervical cancer, so women will still be at risk for some cancers. Second, some women may not get all required doses of the vaccine (or they may not get them at the right times), so they may not get the vaccine's full benefits. Third, women may also not get the vaccine's full benefits if they have already acquired a vaccine HPV type.

Why is the vaccine only recommended for girls/women ages 9 through 26?

The vaccine has been extensively tested in 9 through 26 year-old females so information is only available about vaccine safety and protection for girls/women of this age group. However,

studies on the vaccine are now being done in boys/men, as well as in women older than 26 years of age. The FDA will consider licensing the vaccine for these other groups when there is research to show that it is safe and effective in these groups.

Why is HPV vaccine recommended for girls 11 to 12 years of age?

It is important for girls to get HPV vaccine before they become sexually active. The vaccine is most effective for girls/women who get vaccinated before their first sexual contact. It does not work as well for those who were exposed to the virus before getting the vaccine. However, most women will still benefit from getting the vaccine because they will be protected against other virus types contained in the vaccine.

Should pregnant women be vaccinated?

The vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women. There has only been limited information about vaccine safety among pregnant women and their unborn babies. So far, studies suggest that the vaccine has not caused health problems during pregnancy, nor has it caused health problems for the child. But more research is still needed. For now, pregnant women should wait to complete their pregnancy before getting the vaccine. If a woman finds out she is pregnant after she has started getting the vaccine series, she should wait until after her pregnancy is completed to finish the three-dose series.

What about vaccinating males?

We do not yet know if the vaccine is effective in boys or men. Studies are now being done to find out if the vaccine works to prevent HPV infection and disease in males. When more information is available, this vaccine may be licensed and recommended for boys/men as well.