

Frequently Asked Questions about Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccines

What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

Human papillomavirus (pap-ah-LO-mah-VYE-rus) (HPV) is a common virus that is passed from person to person through oral sex, anal sex or penile-vaginal sex. There are more than 40 HPV types that can infect the genital areas of males and females. HPV is the major cause of cervical cancer in women.

How common is HPV?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. At least half of sexually active people will get HPV some time in their lives. Every year in the U.S., about 6 million people get HPV. HPV is most common in people in their late teens and early 20s.

What is the HPV vaccine?

There are two HPV vaccines approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Both vaccines (Cervarix[®] and Gardasil[®]) protect against most cervical cancers in females. One vaccine (Gardasil[®]) is also approved to prevent the types of HPV that cause the most genital warts and anal cancers in both males and females.

How is the HPV vaccine administered?

The vaccine is given in 3 doses over 6-months.

- 1st dose: Now—or at a date you and your healthcare provider choose
- 2nd dose: 1-2 months after 1st dose
- 3rd dose: 6 months after 1st dose

What are side effects of the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine does not appear to have serious side effects. Common side effects may include pain, redness, swelling or itching at the injection site, headache and nausea.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

The CDC and the NJDHSS recommend the HPV vaccine for all 11-12 year old girls and boys. The vaccine is also recommended for 13-26 year old girls/women and 13-21 year-old boys and men who have not yet received or completed the full series of shots. The vaccine should also be considered for men 22-26 years of age.

Who should not get the HPV vaccine?

People who have had a severe allergic reaction to any component of HPV vaccine, or to an earlier dose of HPV vaccine should not get the HPV vaccine. People who are moderately or severely ill should wait until they recover before getting the vaccine. Pregnant girls/women should not get the vaccine. If a girl/woman finds out that she is pregnant after she has started the vaccine series, she should wait until she completes her pregnancy before finishing the vaccine series.

Does the vaccine protect against all types of HPV?

The vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV and it will not prevent all cases of cervical cancer, anal cancer or genital warts. Up to 30% of cervical cancers and 10% of genital warts will not be prevented by the vaccine. It is important to continue getting screened for cervical cancer (e.g., regular Pap tests).

Where can I get more information?

Your healthcare provider

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services website: www.nj.gov/health

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/hpv

CDC HPV Vaccination Information Page: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/

Childhood immunization schedule:

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/child-schedule.htm

CDC-INFO Contact Center at:

English and Spanish

(800) CDC-INFO

(800) 232-4636

TTY: (888) 232-6348

This information is intended for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation with a healthcare professional.