

Talking to Parents About Human Papillomavirus

About 20 million people in the United States are infected with human papillomavirus (HPV). Each year, another 6.2 million people get a new HPV infection. HPV is most common in young people who are in their late teens and early 20s. While the surest way to prevent HPV is to avoid sexual contact, the vaccine can provide valuable disease prevention in the portion of the adolescent and teen population that is sexually active.

HPV and HPV Vaccine FAQs

What is human papillomavirus?

HPV is a common virus that is passed on through sexual contact. HPV usually has no symptoms, so people may not know they have it. HPV has many different strains or types. Some types can cause cervical cancer in women and also can cause other kinds of cancer in both men and women. Other types of HPV can cause genital warts in both males and females.

In most people, HPV goes away on its own and does not cause health problems. Experts do not know why HPV goes away in some cases but not in others.

Why have an HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine was developed to prevent cervical cancer and genital warts caused by HPV. The vaccine protects against the four types of HPV that most commonly cause approximately 70 percent of cervical cancers. The Texas Department of State Health Services projects that about 1,000 women in Texas would be diagnosed with, and about 400 women would be expected to have died from, cervical cancer in 2008.

The vaccine is given in three doses. The vaccine is licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for girls and women ages 9-26 years.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is recommended for 11- and 12-year-old girls. The vaccine also can be given to girls and women ages 13-26 years who did not get the vaccine when they were younger or who did not complete the vaccination series.

Ideally, girls/women should get this vaccine before their first sexual contact when they could be exposed to HPV. The vaccine does not work as well for those who were exposed to the virus before getting the vaccine.

The vaccine is being studied to see if it can be effective in males.

Is the HPV vaccine effective?

The HPV vaccine is highly effective in preventing these types of HPV in young women who have not been previously exposed to them. The vaccine will not treat existing HPV infections or existing diseases or conditions caused by HPV. The vaccine also will not protect against disease and infection caused by other HPV types not included in the vaccine.

Is the HPV vaccine safe?

The vaccine has been licensed as safe. Before it was approved by the FDA, the vaccine was studied in thousands of females ages 9-26 years in the United States and around the world. The most common side effect is soreness where the shot is given.

For More Information About the HPV Vaccine

Visit the Texas Department of State Health Services' Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Web page at www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/hpv.shtm.

Source

Texas State Registry. www.dshs.state.tx.us/tcr/data.shtm.