

HPV (human papillomavirus)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there is an epidemic of human papillomavirus (HPV) in the United States. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection. It is most common in men and women in their late teens and early 20s. Because so many types of HPV have no symptoms, it is easily spread between sex partners.

There are about 40 different types of HPV that can cause genital infection. Most are not serious and do not even cause any symptoms. Most come to an end in 1 to 2 years. However, some types of HPV can cause serious health problems, including

- Cervical cancer in women. In the United States, about 12,000 women get cervical or other genital cancers from HPV each year.
- Head and neck and anal cancers in men. In the United States, about 7,000 men get head and neck and anal cancers from HPV each year.
- Genital warts in women and men.
- Rarely, warts in the airways of infants and children.

Read on for more information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about HPV and how to prevent it.

How to prevent HPV

There are 3 types of HPV vaccine: Cervarix, Gardasil and Gardasil-9. See the table to the right for a quick comparison.

Mild to moderate reactions to both vaccines may include pain or swelling where the shot was given, fever, headache, and fainting immediately following the shot. Call the doctor right away for severe allergic reactions that may include rash; swelling of the hands and feet, face, or lips; and trouble breathing.

Other ways to prevent HPV

Abstinence

The only sure way to prevent HPV and other sexually transmitted infections is to abstain from all sexual activity, including vaginal, anal, or oral sex. This is a good policy for teens and young adults. Adults can reduce their risk of HPV by limiting the number of partners they have.

Condoms

A condom should always be used because it lowers the risk of genital warts and cancer as well as other sexually transmitted infections. However, condoms do not completely prevent HPV because there is still some genital contact even when condoms are used.

Circumcision

Circumcision does not completely prevent HPV but reduces the risk of HPV infection. There are many other considerations when deciding about circumcision.

Cervarix	Gardasil and Gardasil-9
3-dose series	3-dose series
Females only	Females and males
Females: 11 or 12 years of age. This age group has the best response to the vaccine, and the vaccine must be given before sexual activity begins. HPV vaccine can be started at 9 years. It is also recommended for females aged 13 through 26 years who have not been vaccinated or did not finish the 3-shot series.	Females and males: 11 or 12 years of age. This age group has the best response to the vaccine, and the vaccine must be given before sexual activity begins. HPV vaccine can be started at 9 years. It is also recommended for females aged 13 through 26 years who have not been vaccinated or did not finish the 3-shot series. It may be given to males aged 22 through 26 years and should be given to high-risk males aged 9 through 26 years.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevents most cases of cervical and anal cancer in females if the vaccine is given before a person is exposed to HPV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevents most cases of cervical and anal cancer in females if the vaccine is given before a person is exposed to HPV. • Prevents most cases of anal cancer and should protect against head and neck cancer caused by HPV in males. • Prevents genital warts from strains included in the vaccine in females and males.

Other ways to prevent cervical cancer

Regular Pap tests

Regular Pap tests (also called Pap smears) are still an important way to prevent cervical cancer, including for females who have had the HPV vaccine. A Pap test is a simple test done in the doctor's office in which small amounts of cells are swabbed from the cervix and tested in a lab. Pap tests can detect cell changes in the cervix caused by HPV before they turn into cancer. Pap tests cannot be done at other sites on the body.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

