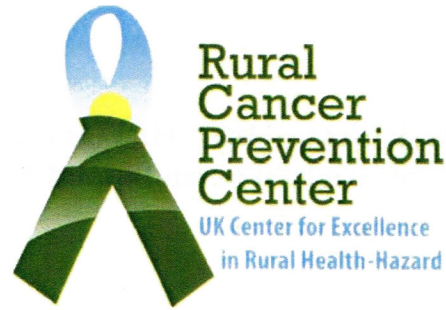


Basic Facts About HPV and HPV Vaccines: What Girls/Women Should Know!



750 Morton Blvd. Hazard, Ky. 41701 (606) 439-3557
<http://www.mc.uky.edu/ruralhealth/rcpc.asp>

HPV Vaccine

For girls/women who are 9-26 years of age, being vaccinated against HPV (types 16 and 18) is a great way to prevent cervical cancer in addition to the routine well woman exams. Because these two types (16 and 18) cause about 2/3 of all cervical cancer cases, your odds of getting cervical cancer go down even more after being vaccinated. Some basic facts you should know are:

- ✓ HPV vaccines are not a guarantee against getting cervical cancer – Pap tests (as part of a well woman exam) are still very important.
- ✓ Two different vaccines are available (see box).
- ✓ Using condoms during sex provides some protection against HPV – be sure that you and your partner use condoms.
- ✓ Women who have sex only with other women are still at risk of getting HPV so vaccination is important.
- ✓ HPV is probably spread to you from a new sex partner relatively soon in the relationship: it is wise to use condoms for at least one year to be safe. Many men and women are infected with HPV. However, there is no way to know for sure. This means that every time you have sex with a new partner you are taking a “new chance” on getting a partner who will unknowingly infect you with HPV. Therefore, it’s wise to limit the number of times you change sex partners.
- ✓ Smoking is a risk factor for cervical cancer. Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health.

Four Important Points about the HPV Vaccine

1. Women who are pregnant should not be vaccinated.
2. Generally, HPV vaccination can benefit women even if they have been having sex for several years – if you are under 27 years of age you should consider being vaccinated.
3. The vaccine is given in three doses over a 6-month period – it is very important that you return for the second and third doses. Researchers do not know how effective the vaccine is for women who do not receive all three doses.
4. The vaccine does not prevent other sexually transmitted diseases and does not treat HPV infection or cervical cancer.

There are two different vaccines available for protection against HPV.

Cervarix

- ✓ Highly protective against types 16 and 18
- ✓ Offers some protection against types 31 and 45
- ✓ Is not protective against genital warts (types 6 and 11)
- ✓ Currently approved for females ages 10-25

Gardasil

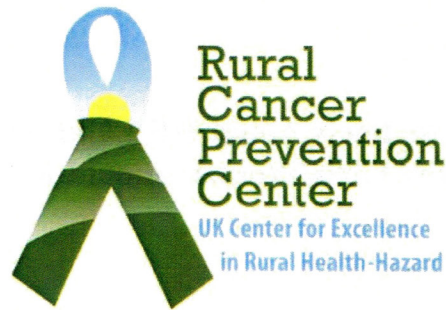
- ✓ Highly protective against types 16 and 18
- ✓ Less protection than Cervarix against types 31 and 45
- ✓ Highly protective against genital warts (types 6 and 11)
- ✓ Currently approved for females and males ages 9 to 26

What Can You Do Now?

The Rural Cancer Prevention Center (RCPC) can help you find a healthcare provider who can give you (or your daughter) a well woman exam. The RCPC can also help you obtain the HPV vaccine. In many cases the RCPC can provide the vaccine to you at no cost. Please contact us at: <http://www.mc.uky.edu/ruralhealth/rcpc.asp> or (606) 439-3557 ext. 83680.



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What is HPV?

Human Papillomaviruses (HPV) are a group of more than 100 related viruses. Certain types of the virus may cause warts, or papillomas, which are non-cancerous and may grow on your hands or feet. However, other types of HPV may cause warts in the genital area.

Genital HPV is transmitted through sex or through foreplay that occurs before sex. The virus is spread through oral sex, penile-vaginal sex, penile-anal sex, and mutual masturbation. Fortunately, the virus is usually not harmful at all. A few basic facts, however, are important:

- ✓ Genital HPV infections are very common. There are over 6 million new genital HPV infections each year in the US. Most women will have an HPV infection at some point in their life, but very few will develop any major problems because their immune system is able to suppress or eliminate the virus.
- ✓ Most HPV infections occur without any symptoms and go away without any treatment over the course of a few years.
- ✓ Over 40 different types of HPV can be spread during sex or foreplay.
- ✓ HPV type 16 and type 18 cause about 2/3 of all cases of cervical cancer (the cervix is the opening to a woman's uterus).
- ✓ Other types of HPV such as type 31 and type 45 can also cause cervical cancer.
- ✓ HPV is most likely to cause cancer when the infection continues for a long time – the exact reasons why the infection lasts longer in some girls/women than others are not known.
- ✓ Two types of HPV cause only genital warts (small warts on the genitals of women and men). These are types 6 and 11.

Why is HPV “Bad”?

About 10 years ago scientists concluded that cervical cancer only occurs in women who have persistent HPV infection (mostly types 16 and 18, but also other types such as 31 and 45). HPV may also cause genital warts as well as certain types of cancers in the head and neck. These head and neck cancers are more likely for girls/women who perform oral sex on boys/men. HPV is also a likely cause of anal cancer. Women who engage in penile-anal sex have a greater risk of this cancer. You should know, however, the most common illness caused by persistent HPV infection is cervical cancer. Although, there is no treatment for HPV infection, the lesions and warts caused by the virus can be treated.

Can Cervical Cancer Be Prevented?

Yes – cervical cancer is highly preventable! The most reliable way to prevent this cancer is complete abstinence from all sexual activity, thus limiting your exposure to the HPV virus. In addition, women should have regular Pap tests until your healthcare provider instructs otherwise. A Pap test is a painless procedure that is part of a reproductive health exam (often called a “Well Women Exam”). The Pap test part of this exam can detect early changes or abnormal findings in the cervix before cancer begins – this means that simple treatments can be provided before any cancer is allowed to develop. Some basic facts you should know are:

- ✓ Girls should have their first well woman exam no later than age 21.
- ✓ Women should continue to have this exam throughout their life. The Pap test part of the well woman exam does not test for HPV. Instead the Pap test detects any early cervical changes or abnormal findings caused by HPV.

