

What is human papillomavirus (HPV) and how do you get it?

What are the symptoms of HPV?

How can I protect myself?



Does insurance cover the cost of the vaccine? / How can I get the vaccine if I don't have insurance?

The vaccine is very expensive, around \$360 for all three injections. However, if you are insured, your insurance may cover the costs. If you are not insured, you may be able to receive the vaccine from sexual health clinics or college health clinics at no to low cost. For information on these options, call your insurance provider or your public or private health clinic.

Will I still need to have Pap tests (cervical cancer screenings), even if I've had the vaccine?

Yes. Vaccinated women will still need to get regular Pap tests within three years of becoming sexually active (or by age 21), since the vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer.

Some of the questions above were adapted from the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/STD/HPV/.



State of North Carolina
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HPV

*Information for
Women between
19-26 Years Old*

What is human papillomavirus (HPV) and how do you get it?

HPV is a common virus that is spread through sexual contact. HPV can be spread even if there is no sexual intercourse. Most of the time, HPV has no symptoms, so people do not know they have it. There are many different strains or types of HPV. Some types can cause cervical cancer in women. Other types of HPV can cause genital warts.

Most sexually active people, (at least 50%) get HPV at some time in their lives, although most never know it because HPV usually has no symptoms and goes away on its own. However, while a person is infected with HPV, they can spread the virus to other sex partners, often without even realizing it. HPV is most common in young women and men who are in their late teens and early 20s.

What are the symptoms of HPV?

Some people will develop visible growths or bumps in the genital area (called genital warts). The virus lives in the body and usually causes no symptoms. Most men and women who have HPV do not know they are infected.

How can I protect myself from getting HPV?

The only sure protection from HPV is lifelong abstinence or a monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner. However, a new vaccine can now protect females (ages 9

to 26) from four major types of HPV. These include two types that cause about 70% of cervical cancer and two types that cause about 90% of genital warts. *HPV vaccine can prevent most genital warts and most cases of cervical cancer.*

Should I get the HPV vaccine?

Doctors recommend this vaccine be given to females between 9 and 26 years old. Ideally, girls should get this vaccine before their first sexual contact when they could be exposed to HPV. This is because the vaccine has the best chance of being 100% effective if given before the girl or young woman has any exposure to the HPV virus.

The vaccine is given as a series of three shots over six months. The best protection is achieved after all three shots are given.

Is the HPV vaccine safe?

Yes. Studies show that the vaccine is extremely safe. This vaccine has been studied in thousands of girls and women in the United States and around the world. These studies have shown no serious side effects. The most common side effect is soreness where the shot is given (in the arm).

What is the connection between HPV infection and cervical cancer?

Some types of HPV can infect a woman's cervix (lower part of womb) and cause the cells to change. Most of the time, HPV goes away on its own. When HPV is gone, the

cervical cells go back to normal. But sometimes, HPV does not go away. Instead, it stays in the body and continues to change the cells on a woman's cervix. These cervical cell changes (also called cervical dysplasia) can lead to cancer over time, if they are not treated.

What if I'm already sexually active - can this vaccine help me?

Females who are sexually active may also benefit from the vaccine. But, they may get less benefit from the vaccine since they may have already acquired one or more HPV type(s) covered by the vaccine. Few young women are infected with all four of the HPV types. So, by receiving the vaccine, they would still get protection from those types they have not acquired.

Is HPV the same thing as HIV or herpes?

No, HPV is not the same as HIV or herpes virus (herpes simplex virus or HSV). While these are all viruses that can be sexually transmitted – HIV and HSV do not cause the same symptoms or health problems as HPV.

