



Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Commonly Asked Questions—What You and Your Patients Should Know

Q: How many types of HPV are there?

A: There are over 100 different types of HPV. There are more than 40 HPV types that can infect the genital areas of males and females. These HPV types can also infect the mouth and throat. Most people who become infected with HPV do not know they have it.

Q: How common is HPV?

A: HPV is very common. In fact, it is the most common sexually-transmitted infection in the US. HPV is so common that nearly all sexually-active men and women will get at least one type of HPV at some point in their lives. Most people never know that they have been infected and may give HPV to a partner without knowing it. About 79 million Americans are currently infected with HPV. About 14 million people become newly infected each year.

Q: If HPV infection is so common, is it really that bad?

A: Most people with HPV never develop symptoms or health problems. Most HPV infections (9 out of 10) go away by themselves within two years. But, sometimes, HPV infections will persist and can cause health problems. Health problems that can be caused by HPV include:

- Genital warts (warts on the genital areas)*
- Cervical cancer (cancer on a woman's cervix)
- A type of head and neck cancer called oropharyngeal cancer (cancer in the back of throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils) in women and men
- Anal cancer (cancer on the anus) in women and men
- Vulvar and vaginal cancer (cancer on the vulva or vagina) in women
- Penile cancer (cancer on the penis) in men

*The types of HPV that can cause genital warts are not the same as the types of HPV that can cause cancers.

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Q: How many people get cancer and/or genital warts from HPV?

A: Every year, there are about 17,500 women and 9,300 men affected by cancers caused by HPV. Also, about 1 in 100 sexually active adults in the United States have genital warts at any given time.

Q: Who should get HPV vaccine?

A: The vaccine has been proven to be effective for females from age 11 up to age 26. Males can benefit from the vaccine from age 11 to age 21. The vaccine is also recommended for any young man who has sex with men and also for young men with compromised immune systems (including HIV) through age 26, if they did not get HPV vaccine when they were younger. Since HPV is a sexually transmitted disease, the vaccine should be administered prior to sexual activity.

Q: Why is the vaccine recommended for people as young as age 11?

A: For HPV vaccines to be effective, they should be given prior to exposure to HPV. HPV vaccine produces a higher immune response in preteens than it does in older teens and young adults.

Q: How well does HPV vaccine work?

A: The HPV vaccine works extremely well. Clinical trials showed the vaccines provided close to 100% protection against precancers and for HPV4, genital warts. Since the vaccine was first recommended in 2006, there has been a 56% reduction in HPV infections among teen girls in the US, even with very low HPV vaccination rates. Research has also shown that fewer teens are getting genital warts. In other countries such as Australia where there is higher HPV vaccination coverage, HPV vaccine has also reduced the number of cases of precancers of the cervix in young women in that country. Also, genital warts decreased dramatically in young women and men in Australia since the HPV vaccine was introduced.

Q: How long will the HPV vaccine last?

A: Protection provided by HPV vaccine should be long-lasting. Data from clinical trials and ongoing research show that HPV vaccine lasts in the body for at least 10 years without becoming less effective. There is no evidence to suggest that HPV vaccine loses the ability to provide protection over time.

Q: Will the vaccine require a booster?

A: Currently in the US, there are three shots in the HPV vaccine series that are given over six months; there are no booster doses recommended. Like all vaccines, HPV vaccine is continually monitored to make sure that it remains safe and effective. If protection from HPV vaccine does not last as long as it should, then the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practice would review the data and determine if a booster should be recommended.

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Q: Does someone have to restart the HPV vaccine series if too much time passes between the shots?

A: It is recommended that all three shots of the HPV vaccine series be given over six months; the second shot should be given one to two months after the first, and the third dose should be given six months after the first dose. However, if someone waits longer than that between shots, they do not need to restart the series. Even if has been months or years since the last shot, the series should still be completed.

Q: What are the side effects of HPV vaccine and how often do these side effects occur?

A: Several mild to moderate problems are known to occur with this HPV vaccine. These do not last long and go away on their own. These include:

- Reactions in the arm where the shot was given:
 - Pain (about 8 people in 10)
 - Redness or swelling (about 1 person in 4)

- Fever:
 - Mild (100° F) (about 1 person in 10)
 - Moderate (102° F) (about 1 person in 65)

- Other:
 - Headache (about 1 person in 3)
 - Brief fainting spells and related symptoms (such as jerking movements) can happen after any medical procedure, including vaccination.

Additional Information and Resources

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/who/teens/for-hcp/hpv-resources.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/>

<http://www.theyellowumbrella.org/> - Christina Baze's Organization for Cervical Cancer Awareness

SOMEONE YOU LOVE **THE HPV EPIDEMIC**

“An in-depth documentary on the HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV) and the stories of struggle, tragedy and triumph surrounding this complicated and often misunderstood infection.”

<http://www.hpvepidemic.com/#!/professionals/c1cnr>

If you have any questions, please contact the Maine Immunization Program at:

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