



Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

What is HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine, Gardasil™, protects against 2 types of Human Papillomaviruses that cause most cervical cancers and a number of less common cancers such as cancers of the anus, penis, vagina and vulva. It also protects against 2 types of HPV that cause genital warts.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is provided free to girls in B.C. in grade 6 because:

- Girls are best protected when they get the HPV vaccine before they become sexually active.
- The vaccine prevents HPV infection but does not get rid of it once the infection occurs.
- In teenage girls, the lining of the reproductive tract is still developing. This makes it easier for them to get infected with HPV.

Girls born in 1994 or later who missed getting the HPV vaccine may contact their local health unit to get vaccinated at no cost.

The HPV vaccine, Gardasil™, is also approved for but not provided free to the following people:

- Females between the ages of 9 and 45 years
- Males between the ages of 9 and 26 years

Those not covered by the school-based program can speak with their health care provider about how to purchase the vaccine privately.

It is best to get the HPV vaccine before becoming sexually active and coming in contact with HPV; however, people who are sexually active may still benefit from the vaccine. The vaccine does not treat HPV infections.

Benefits of the HPV vaccine

In those who have never been infected with HPV, the Gardasil™ vaccine prevents:

- 7 out of 10 cases of cancer of the cervix.
- 9 out of 10 cases of genital warts.

The vaccine is safe, very effective and has few side effects.

It is important for women to get regular Pap tests once they become sexually active because the HPV vaccine protects against most but not all cancers of the cervix.

Possible reactions after the vaccine

Common reactions may include soreness, redness and swelling in the arm where the shot was given, headache and fever.

For any vaccine, there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue, lips or eyes. If this happens, call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number. This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in a million people who get the vaccine. It is important to stay in the clinic setting for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine.

Report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Acetaminophen or Tylenol® can be given for fever or soreness. ASA or Aspirin® should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

Who should not get the vaccine?

The vaccine is not recommended for:

- People who have had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of HPV vaccine or to any component of the vaccine (including yeast).
- Pregnant women.

What is HPV and who can get it?

HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Three out of 4 sexually active people will get HPV at some point in their lives.

Anyone who has any kind of sexual activity involving oral or genital contact can get HPV. Sexual intercourse is not necessary to get infected.

What happens when you are infected with HPV?

- Most people do not show any signs or symptoms and can pass the virus on to others without even knowing it.
- Most often an HPV infection will clear on its own. For some people, HPV will not go away and cells infected with the virus can become cancerous over time.

Every year in B.C.:

- 150 women will get cervical cancer and 40 will die from the disease.
- 6,000 women will develop high risk changes to the cervix which are precancerous.
- 10,000 invasive procedures will be done to stop cancer of the cervix from developing.
- 90 people will get anal cancer and 20 will die from the disease.
- 5,500 people will develop genital warts.

Mature minor consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Efforts are first made to seek parental/guardian or representative consent prior to immunization. However, children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations.

For more information

For more information, see HealthLink BC File [#101a Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\) Infection](#).

For more information on immunizations visit Immunize BC at www.immunizebc.ca

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm or your local public health unit.

Click on www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.



ImmunizeBC



BC Centre for Disease Control
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