

HPV - What You Need to Know

What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common virus that years after infection can cause cancers – including cervical, genital, anal, and oral cancers. HPV can also cause genital warts. The virus is spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact. HPV infects the genital areas and can also infect the mouth and throat.

Who is at risk of contracting HPV?

Most people will get HPV at some point in their lives. In fact, over 42 million people in the U.S. are currently infected with 13 million new infections each year. While a majority of infections cause no symptoms and go away on their own, other infections persist and lead to cancer later in life. HPV is responsible for more than 36,000 cases of cancer in the U.S. each year.

How can we prevent the spread of HPV?

Since most people infected with HPV show no symptoms and will likely not even know they are infected, it is important to note that they can still spread the virus. There is no cure for HPV, only treatment for symptoms. The HPV vaccine is the best way to prevent infection and transmission of HPV.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is recommended at 11 -12 years of age but can be given as early as age 9. A second dose should be given 6-12 months after the first. Vaccination at this age is important for two reasons:

- The vaccine is more effective between the ages of 9 and 12 than in older adolescents and adults.
- It helps ensure protection before exposure to the virus and prevents cancer from developing in the future.

HPV vaccine considerations for other age groups

The HPV vaccine is also recommended for everyone through age 26 if not previously vaccinated. After age 15, 3 doses of the vaccine are needed instead of 2. The second dose should be given 1 to 2 months after the first. The third dose should be given 6 months after the second.

Adults 27 to 45 years of age not previously vaccinated should talk to their medical provider to decide if the HPV vaccine is right for them.

 Flip over to read about HPV vaccine safety and get answers to common questions.



Is the HPV vaccine safe?

The HPV vaccine is very safe. It has been studied and monitored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for more than 15 years. There have not been any serious safety concerns related to the vaccine. More than 135 million HPV vaccinations have safely been given in the United States. Most people do not have any reaction to vaccination. Others have very mild side effects such as pain or redness where the shot was given.

Other common questions about the HPV vaccine:

- **Does the HPV vaccine negatively impact fertility?**

No. In fact, the HPV vaccine can help protect fertility since it prevents cancers that could impact the ability to conceive or carry a child.

- **Does the HPV vaccine encourage sexual activity?**

No. Research shows there is no association between the HPV vaccine and increased sexual activity.

- **Is the HPV vaccine for both boys and girls?**

Yes. HPV does not discriminate. Regardless of factors like gender or sexual orientation, anyone can get or transmit HPV or develop cancer after infection. The vaccine protects against infections that can cause anal, penile, cervical, vaginal, vulvar, and throat and mouth cancers. Vaccination also helps to prevent the spread of HPV to future partners.

- **How effective is the HPV vaccine?**

The HPV vaccine protects against 9 types of HPV. It is nearly 100% effective at preventing persistent infection and prevents more than 90% of HPV-related cancers.

Have more questions about the HPV vaccine?

Talk with your healthcare provider, pharmacist, or community health center.

Find free and low-cost vaccine providers near you:

<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/find-free-low-cost-vaccine-provider>

#KeepCOHealthy

Sources

<https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/about/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/hcp/recommendations.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccineafety/vaccines/hpv.html>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6593582/>

www.ImmunizeColorado.org | www.ImmunizeforGood.com



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