

# HPV FAQ SHEET

## What is HPV?

The human papillomavirus, more commonly known as HPV, is a group of more than 150 related viruses. Some HPV types cause warts and papillomas (non-cancerous tumors) and others cause cancers.

HPV types 16 and 18 cause 70% of all cervical, anal, and genital cancers in women, and 70% of anal cancers in men. HPV types 6 and 11 cause 90% of all genital warts in men and women. Seventy percent of cancers of the oropharynx may be linked to HPV.

## Is HPV contagious?

HPV is a contagious virus and is so common that most people get it at some time in their lives.

## How can people get HPV?

HPV is most commonly transmitted by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus but intercourse is not necessary, as the virus can be transmitted by close intimate skin to skin contact. HPV can be passed on even when an infected person has no signs or symptoms. You can develop cancer years after you have sex with someone who is infected, making it hard to know when you first became infected.

A mother who is infected with the virus can pass on the infection to her child during birth through the vaginal canal.

## How are HPV vaccines administered?

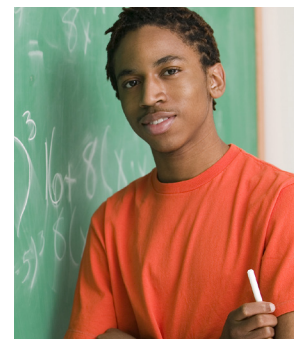
HPV vaccines are administered via needle injection and do not contain any live virus, or even killed virus or DNA from the virus, so they cannot cause cancer or other HPV-related illnesses. After vaccination, exposures to disease-causing agents are less threatening to an individual's health due to the body's well developed immune response.

## What is the HPV vaccine?

**Gardasil 9** protects against 9 types of HPV infections and is approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for use in females for the prevention of cervical cancer, and some vulvar and vaginal cancers, and in males and females to prevent anal cancer and precancerous anal lesions. Gardasil is also approved to prevent genital warts. The vaccine is approved for females and males ages 9 to 26.

## Who should be vaccinated and when?

Boys and girls who are 11 or 12 years old should get the HPV vaccine. Vaccination can begin as early as 9 years old and catch-up vaccination is recommended for males and females through age 26. For children ages 9-14, the vaccine is administered in two doses, with the second dose given six to twelve months after initiation. For adolescents and young adults ages 15-26, the vaccination is administered in three doses with the second dose given two months after initiation and the third dose given at six months after initiation. The HPV vaccine can be given on the same day that the child receives the Tdap and meningococcal vaccines.



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## **What health problems are caused by HPV?**

HPV can cause genital warts and cancers. The following cancers can be caused by HPV:

- Vulvar
- Vaginal
- Cervical
- Penile
- Anal
- Oropharyngeal (throat, tonsil and back of the tongue)

HPV can also cause Recurrent Respiratory Papillomatosis (RRP) which results in wart-like growths in the throats of infants who contract HPV from infected mothers during childbirth. The affected infants usually undergo multiple surgeries.

## **Why do boys need to be vaccinated?**

HPV causes cancers in males as well as females. Male cancers include penile, anal, and oropharyngeal cancer. New cases of HPV-related oropharynx cancer presenting to MD Anderson are increasing at an alarming rate; from 169 cases in 1990 to 530 in 2012.

## **Why is the vaccine recommended at such a young age?**

The HPV vaccines produce a higher immune response in preteens and young teens than they do in older teens and young adults - which is why it is so important for children to get vaccinated earlier than age 15. Those vaccinated before age 15 only need two doses. Those older than 15 need three doses. People should complete the series of the HPV vaccine series long before they are exposed to HPV.

## **Why can't the vaccine be given to infants?**

Research shows that HPV vaccine protection lasts for at least 10 years, and researchers believe that the protection should last longer. There is no clinical trial with the vaccine in infants.

## **Is the HPV vaccine safe?**

The vaccine has been extensively monitored for safety. Common side effects include pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, and possible fainting. These effects go away on their own. Brief fainting spells can happen after any medical procedure, including vaccination. Some other reactions can include low grade fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, and muscle or joint pain. These are all considered mild reactions. Over 90 million doses have been given in the U.S. No severe or unusual reactions have been reported. There is always a risk of allergic reaction with any vaccine.

## **How are the HPV vaccines paid for?**

HPV vaccinations for males and females are fully covered by insurance companies under the Affordable Care Act, Adult Safety Net and Vaccines for Children programs.

## **What is the annual HPV-related disease cost in Texas?**

In Texas, annual HPV-related disease costs for men and women approach \$170 million.

## **Does HPV vaccination lead to riskier sexual behavior?**

Studies have shown that being vaccinated against HPV will not affect sexual behavior. For those who practice abstinence, there is no guarantee that a future partner will have made the same choice, leaving them open to future infection. Even in the absence of intercourse, HPV can be spread through intimate skin to skin contact.

## **What is the likelihood of acquiring an HPV infection?**

The lifetime risk of acquiring an HPV infection is approximately 80%. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). HPV is so common that nearly all sexually active men and women get it at some point in their lives. Each year in the U.S., more than 36,000 cases of HPV-related cancers could be prevented by getting the HPV vaccine.

## **Should I revaccinate with Gardasil 9?**

If you have completed the 3-shot series with Gardasil or Cervarix, you do not necessarily need to be revaccinated with Gardasil 9. It is a personal choice. Gardasil and Cervarix both provide protection against HPV types 16 and 18 which are responsible for most HPV-associated cancers and because of this, there is no CDC recommendation for revaccination. If you have not completed the 3-shot series, you can complete the series with Gardasil 9.