



Regular Pap tests  
can save your life

## Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine – Fact Sheet

### Make an informed decision about having an HPV Vaccine.

#### What is the HPV vaccine?

- In July 2006, Health Canada approved a vaccine that protects against four of the many types of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) which are responsible for causing cancer of the cervix and genital warts. (See over for more information on HPV.)
- The vaccine has been approved for females between 9 and 26 years of age.
- Information on use of HPV vaccines in men is not yet available.
- HPV vaccine **does not replace** Pap tests, but is a new important option to help prevent cancer of the cervix.

#### Should my daughter or I have the HPV vaccine?

- HPV vaccine is not for everyone. The vaccine is most effective if received from 9 to 13 years of age, before possible exposure to HPV through sexual contact. Females between 14 and 26 years would benefit even if they are already sexually active, as they may not yet have HPV infection. It is unlikely that they would be infected with all four HPV types included in the vaccine. The vaccine is not approved for women older than 26 years.
- If you are a teenager, be sure to talk with your parents, family physician or nurse about this decision.

#### If I get an HPV vaccine, should I stop having Pap tests?

- NO, it is very important to **keep having Pap tests** after receiving the vaccine.
- Even if you've had an HPV vaccine, start having regular Pap tests within three years of first sexual activity.
- For more information on Pap tests, please go to: [http://www.cancercare.on.ca/index\\_cervicalScreening.htm](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/index_cervicalScreening.htm)

| Benefits and Facts   | Limitations  |
|--|--|
| The vaccine is an important advance in preventing cervical cancer and genital warts.   | The vaccine will not protect women who already have the four HPV types that are covered by the vaccine.  |
| If received before possible exposure to HPV through sexual contact, the vaccine protects against two of the many high-risk types of HPV (16 and 18), which are responsible for 70% of cervical cancer cases. | It does not protect against infection with other high-risk types of HPV that also cause cancer of the cervix.  |
| The vaccine protects against two low-risk HPV types (6 and 11) that are associated with 90% of genital warts.  | It does not protect against infection with the other low-risk types of HPV   |
| The vaccine offers protection for at least five years.   | A booster may be required for protection beyond five years.  |
| Three doses are needed over a six-month period.  | You must receive all three doses to be fully protected.  |
| The vaccine costs about \$400-\$500 in Canada, for all three doses.  | Currently, patients must pay for the vaccine – this may present a barrier. If you have extended health insurance, your plan may cover the cost of the vaccine. |
| The vaccine is safe, effective and has few side effects (mild pain or swelling at injection site).   | The vaccine requires an injection by a doctor or nurse.  |

### **How do I get an HPV vaccine?**

- Talk to your doctor or nurse about the vaccine to decide if the vaccine is a good option for you.
- At the present time, you must pay for the vaccine which is available in some doctor's offices, community clinics or sexual health clinics.
- Public Health Units are not providing free vaccine; some may offer it for a fee.
- Currently, the vaccine is not publicly funded.
- In February 2007, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization released recommendations for use of HPV vaccine in Canada. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/07pdf/acs33-02.pdf>

### **Get the facts about HPV and cervical cancer:**

- HPV is a sexually transmitted virus that is the cause of cancer of the cervix.
- HPV can also cause genital warts.
- Regular screening with Pap tests can prevent almost all cases of cancer of the cervix.
- Pap tests can detect changes in the cervix that could progress to cancer, if not treated.
- Cervical cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death for women around the world, and is still a significant cause of death among Canadian women.
- Each week in Ontario, 10 women are diagnosed with, and three die from, cancer of the cervix; it is the 10th most common cancer.
- *A major reason that women continue to die of cervical cancer is never or seldom having Pap tests.*

For more information on HPV, cancer of the cervix and Pap tests, please go to:  
[http://www.cancercare.on.ca/index\\_cervicalScreening.htm](http://www.cancercare.on.ca/index_cervicalScreening.htm)