

Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary Template

Title: HPV Vaccination

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Plain Language Summary:

What is HPV?

The human papilloma virus (HPV) is a virus transferred by skin contact through hand contact, sex, oral sex, and anal sex. It is the most common virus transferred by sexual activity. Many people will get the virus during their lives, but most of the time these infections do not cause symptoms. Only a few will have a form of the virus that will cause disease. Most people do not know that they have had the virus, and clear the virus within two years. But if the virus persists it may lead to diseases like genital warts or cervical cancer. For this reason women should have screening and get the vaccine to prevent complications from HPV.

Who is at risk of getting HPV?

There are factors that put men and women are at risk of getting HPV:

- Having more than one sexual partner.
- Having a partner with more than one sexual partner
- First sex before the age of 18
- Having had other sexually transmitted diseases

What is the HPV vaccine?

There are two HPV vaccines available. Gardasil is one vaccine and protects against four of the types of HPV that may cause cervical cancer or genital warts. Cervarix is the other which protects against two of the types that may cause cervical cancer. Both protect against most types of cervical cancer. The vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV, and women should still be getting routine Pap smear screening even if they receive the vaccine. The vaccine does not protect from other STD's.

Who should receive the vaccine?

It is recommended that the vaccine be given before first sexual contact. Girls between 11 or 12 should start to receive the vaccine. It is safe to start the vaccine in women at age 9 who may be at higher risk of getting HPV at a younger age. Females 13 to 18 can receive it if they have not yet started the vaccine. Women ages 19 to 26 should get the vaccine only if it is unlikely that they may have HPV. The Gardasil vaccine is now available for males between the ages of 9 and 26. Again, it should be given before first sexual activity. Women who are pregnant should not get the vaccine. People with moderate illness should not receive the vaccine until they are healthy.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

The vaccine is given in the arm three times over a six months period. It is a very safe vaccine. However, it may cause an allergic reaction in a very few number of people. Those who have had a severe reaction to the vaccine should not get further doses. Mild

reactions to the vaccine include pain and swelling at the injection site, mild to moderate fever, and headache. Some people may become dizzy or light-headed as with any kind of injection.

Additional Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/hpv/>

Up To Date

<http://www.uptodate.com/contents/patient-information-human-papillomavirus-hpv-vaccine>

National Cervical Cancer Coalition

http://www.nccc-online.org/patient_info/vaccine.html

Key Words:

Human Papilloma Virus

Vaccine

Cervical cancer

Genital warts

Males

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