

The HPV vaccine IS Cancer Prevention

What is HPV?

HPV (human papillomavirus) is a common virus that is spread from one person to another by skin-to-skin contact in the genital area. HPV can be spread even if there is no sexual intercourse.

The virus lives in the body and usually causes no symptoms. Some people will develop visible growths or bumps in the genital area, but most men and women who have HPV do not know they are infected. Both males and females can get it and pass it on to their sex partners without even realizing it. **HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection.**

How is HPV related to cancer?

Some types of HPV can cause cervical cancer in women by infecting the cervix and causing the cells to change. HPV can also cause oropharynx cancer and other cancers in males. Most of the time, HPV goes away on its own. But sometimes, HPV does not go away and instead, it stays in the body and continues to change the cells, such as those on a woman's cervix. These cervical cell changes can lead to cancer over time, if they are not treated. **Each year, about 21,000 of HPV-related cancers could be prevented by getting the HPV vaccine.**

How can my child be protected from getting HPV?

Vaccines are now available that can protect females and males (ages 9-26) from some of the major types of HPV.

- The quadrivalent HPV vaccine (Gardasil) — Protects against the 4 types of HPV that cause about 70% of cervical cancer and about 90% of genital warts. This vaccine is available for males and females.
- The bivalent HPV vaccine (Cervarix) — Protects against the types of HPV that cause 70% of cervical cancer. This vaccine is only available for females at this time.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends that all boys and girls ages 11 or 12 years get vaccinated. Catch-up vaccines are recommended for males through age 21 and for females through age 26, if they did not get vaccinated when they were younger.

It takes 3!

The vaccine is given as a series of three shots over six months. **The best protection is achieved after all three shots are given to an individual before he or she is exposed to HPV.**

How much does the vaccine cost?

The vaccine costs around \$390 for all three injections. However, health insurance may cover these costs. For children ages 18 or younger and who meet one of the following qualifications may be eligible to receive the vaccine from the state at **no cost**:

- Is eligible for Medicaid
- Has no health insurance
- Has health insurance, but it does not cover the cost of vaccine

What can I do?

Please contact your doctor or health care provider, as well as your insurance company to determine if they will cover the cost of the vaccine. The Hillsborough County Health Department provides HPV vaccinations until age 26 through VFC (Vaccines for Children) and other programs. Tampa Family Health Centers in Hillsborough County and Community Health Centers in Pinellas County also administer HPV vaccinations to children under VFC.

- **Hillsborough County Health Department:**
813-307-8077 or 813-307-8064
- **Pinellas County Health Department:**
727-824-6900 or 727-524-4410
- **Tampa Family Health Center:** 813-397-5300
- **Community Health Centers of Pinellas:**
727-824-8181

Get vaccinated! Studies show that the HPV vaccine is extremely safe.

For more information about HPV, please contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at 1-800-232-4636 or www.cdc.gov/std/hpv