HPV VACCINE: INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

As parents, you do everything you can to protect your children's health now and for the future. Did you know that you can protect them from several types of cancer with HPV vaccination?

What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

Human papillomavirus (pap-ah-LO-mah-VYE-rus) (HPV) is a group of common viruses that affect both boys and girls. HPV can cause anal and mouth/throat cancers. It can also cause cancer in the cervix, vulva, and vagina in women; and cancer of the penis in men. Different types of HPV can cause genital warts.

What are the symptoms?

Even though most people do not show any symptoms, HPV can still be spread by skin-to-skin contact during any type of sexual activity with an infected person.

How common is HPV?

Most people will be infected at some point in their lives. HPV infection is most common during the late teens and early 20s.

- About 79 million Americans are currently infected with HPV.
- About 14 million people become infected each year.

Is there a cure?

There is no cure for HPV, but there are ways to treat the health problems caused by HPV such as genital warts and certain cancers. Most infections will clear on their own, but there is no way to know which people will develop cancer or other health problems. **Prevention is better than treatment.**

How can HPV be prevented?

There are two vaccines to prevent HPV infections and related cancers:

- Both vaccines prevent the HPV types that cause most cervical and anal cancers.
- One vaccine also prevents vaginal and vulvar cancers in females and genital warts in both males and females.
- The HPV vaccine is given in 3 shots over 6 months.

Who should get HPV vaccine?

The vaccine is recommended for 11-12 year old boys and girls because:

- The immune response to the HPV vaccine is better in preteens.
- Your child should be completely vaccinated before they are exposed to the virus.

Catch-up vaccination can be given at ages 13 through 26.

Who should not get HPV vaccine?

Pregnant women and anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to any component of the vaccine or to a previous dose should not receive the vaccine.

Is HPV vaccine safe?

The vaccine is very safe. Side effects are generally mild and may include a sore arm, fever, and headache.

What if we can't afford the vaccine?

Families who need help paying for vaccines should ask their health care provider about Vaccines for Children (VFC). The VFC program provides vaccines to uninsured and underinsured children younger than 19 years old. Parents may have to pay administration and office visit fees. For more information, contact the NJ VFC at (609) 826-4862.

Where can I get more information?

- Your health care provider
- New Jersey Department of Health: http://go.usa.gov/XEdV
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: http://go.usa.gov/XESW

NJ Health New Jersey Department of Health