

# Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

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## What is the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine?

HPV vaccine protects against some types of the human papillomavirus that cause cervical cancer, anal cancer, and genital warts. Two HPV vaccines are available:

- HPV4 – licensed for males and females. It protects against four types of HPV including two types that cause 75 percent of cervical cancers in women and most anal cancers in men, and two types that cause 90 percent of genital warts in both women and men.
- HPV2 – licensed only for females. It protects against two types of HPV that cause 75 percent of cervical cancers.

These vaccines do not protect against all types of HPV or other sexually transmitted infections.

## Who should get the vaccine and when should they get it?

- Females – the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends routine vaccination for all girls aged 11 through 12 years. For unvaccinated females, the recommendation goes up through age 26. Health care providers may also give the vaccine to girls as young as nine years.
- Males – the ACIP recently approved a recommendation for routine vaccination of boys aged 11 through 12 years. For unvaccinated males, the recommendation goes up through age 21. Health care providers may vaccinate boys as young as 9 years and men aged 22 through 26 years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will soon make this recommendation available. Until then, health care providers may vaccinate males using the permissive recommendation that is in place.

To be up-to-date on this immunization, males and females need three doses of the vaccine. Talk to your health care provider about the vaccine schedule. HPV vaccine is not required for school attendance in Washington State.

## How long does protection last?

So far, studies show that protection lasts at least five years, although they suggest that protection will last much longer. Research will continue to see how long each vaccine's protection lasts.

## Will the vaccine help if I already have HPV?

No. The vaccine doesn't protect women or men against any HPV infection they already have. However, people benefit from getting the vaccine since most are not yet infected with all HPV types that the vaccine helps protect against.

## How can I get the vaccine?

Kids under age 19 can get HPV vaccine for free in Washington State. Some health care provider offices charge an administration fee or an office visit fee. You can ask to waive the administration fee if you can't pay.

For people age 19 and older, the vaccine is available from many clinics and pharmacies. Most health insurance plans cover the vaccine for people recommended to get it. Call your health plan to check your coverage. For adults without health insurance, the companies that make these vaccines have programs to help pay for them. Find out if your health care provider participates in these programs.

### **Are HPV vaccines safe?**

Yes. Prior to licensing, all vaccines go through safety and performance tests. After licensing, vaccines go through intensive monitoring to check for side effects. But immunizations, like any medication, are not 100 percent risk free. In most cases, vaccines cause no side effects, or only mild reactions such as fever or soreness at the injection site. Very rarely, people experience more serious side effects, such as allergic reactions. Be sure to tell your health care provider about health problems or known severe, life-threatening allergies to medications or specific goods. Severe reactions to vaccines occur so rarely that the risk is difficult to calculate.

Parents and health care providers can report adverse reactions following immunizations to the Vaccine Adverse Events Report System. This system is a national safety surveillance program. It collects information about possible side effects that occur after administration of vaccines licensed for use in the United States.

### **What is HPV and how does it affect the body?**

HPV is a very common virus. There are many types of HPV. Most are harmless and do not cause infections or symptoms. However, some types of HPV can cause cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers in females while other types can cause anal, neck, and head cancer in both males and females. Other types of HPV can also cause genital warts in both males and females.

### **How is HPV spread?**

HPV spreads through genital contact. Most people who have HPV do not have symptoms. They can easily spread the virus to others without even knowing it.

### **Who can get HPV?**

In the United States, an estimated 75 to 80 percent of sexually active people will get HPV at some time in their lives. Both women and men can get HPV and spread it to others without realizing they have the virus. HPV infection is most common in women and men in their late teens and early 20s.

### **How can HPV infection be prevented?**

The best way to prevent HPV infection is to abstain from all sexual activity. Even people with only one lifetime partner can get HPV if their partner had previous sexual partners. Using condoms during sex offers good protection against sexual infections like HPV. The HPV vaccines offer by far the best protection if given before sexual activity starts. They do not get rid of existing HPV infections. The HPV vaccine can prevent infections from some of the most common and serious types of HPV that cause genital warts and cervical and anal cancers.

### **How do I know if I have HPV?**

Some people know they have HPV because they have symptoms, such as genital warts. Most people **don't know** they have HPV because they have no signs or symptoms.

Women may find out they have HPV through cervical cancer screening (Pap tests) and HPV antibody testing. Health care providers usually do not test for HPV unless they find abnormal cervical cell changes in a Pap test. Routine HPV tests for women or men do not happen at this time. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have questions about HPV testing.

### **How does HPV cause cervical cancer?**

Most HPV infections clear up on their own, but some types of HPV can infect cells in the cervix (the opening to the uterus or womb) and cause changes. If the infection continues untreated, these changes can lead to cervical cancer. This is usually a slow process. It can take years for HPV infection to lead to cervical cancer.

Pap tests can detect cell changes long before cervical cancer develops. Women who get the HPV vaccine should continue getting Pap tests. The vaccines do not protect against all types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer.

### **Where can I find more information?**

#### **State Resources**

##### ***Washington State Department of Health***

Breast and Cervical Health Program

[www.doh.wa.gov/wbchp](http://www.doh.wa.gov/wbchp)

Comprehensive Cancer Control

[www.doh.wa.gov/ccc](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ccc)

Family Planning and Reproductive Health

[www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/FPRH](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/FPRH)

Office of Immunization and Child Profile

[www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize)

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

[www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/std/](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/std/)

#### **Federal/ National Resources**

##### ***HPV Infection & Vaccine***

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/std/hpv](http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv)

Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/acip/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/acip/default.htm)

American Social Health Association

[www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org)

Food and Drug Administration

[www.fda.gov/cber/vaccines.htm](http://www.fda.gov/cber/vaccines.htm)

##### **Cervical Cancer**

American Cancer Society

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

National Cancer Institute

[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

##### **Vaccine Safety**

Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System

<http://vaers.hhs.gov/index>