

# HPV & the HPV Vaccine: Frequently Asked Questions

## What is HPV?

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STI) in the United States. There are over 100 different types of HPV. Some strains of HPV are responsible for warts of the penis, scrotum, vulva, anus, rectum, urethra, cervix, and mouth (**Genital Warts**). HPV is most often spread through vaginal, oral, and anal intercourse and is transmitted by skin-to-skin and mucous membrane contact (CDC, 2006).

## How are HPV and cervical cancer related?

Some types of HPV can infect a woman's **cervix** (lower, narrow portion of the uterus where it joins with the top end of the vagina) and cause the cells to change. HPV can go away on its own. However, if HPV persists and is not treated, then cell changes ("precancers") of the cervix can lead to cancer over time (CDC, 2006).

## What is prevalence of HPV and cervical cancer?

Approximately 5.5 million people are newly infected with genital HPV each year and about 20 million people are currently infected. Some studies estimate that 50% to 75% of sexually active people are exposed to at least one strain of HPV, although most people do not develop symptoms. According to the American Cancer Society, estimates reveal that in 2006, over 9,700 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer. In the U.S., it is estimated that of those diagnosed, 3,700 women will die from cervical cancer.

## What are the subtypes of HPV?

HPV types 6 and 11 cause 90% of genital warts. HPV types 16 and 18 cause 70% of cervical cancers. Subtypes that are responsible for warts do not always cause cancer (CDC, 2006).

## How effective is the HPV vaccine?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2006), studies have found the vaccine to be almost 100% effective for the prevention of diseases caused by four strains of HPV (HPV 6, 11, 16, 18) "precancers" of the cervix, vulva and vagina, and genital warts.

## How safe is the vaccine and what are the side effects?

The FDA has given licensure to the vaccine as being safe and effective. The vaccine has been tested in more than 11,000 females (ages 9-26 years) around the world. No serious side effects have been determined. The most common side effect is soreness at the site of injection (CDC, 2006).

## Will sexually active females benefit from the vaccine?

Yes! Females who are sexually active may benefit from the vaccine. It is rare that all four strains of HPV the vaccine protects against are present in any one person. A woman who is sexually active may have less benefit from the vaccine since she could have already acquired one of the four strains the vaccine protects against (CDC, 2006).

## Do insurance plans provide coverage?

Some insurance companies may cover the vaccine and some may not. Most large insurance plans cover recommended vaccinations. Sometimes there is a short lag-time after a vaccine is recommended before it is available and covered by health care insurance plans (CDC, 2006). The BCBS insurance for full-time students at the University of Rochester does not cover the cost of this vaccine. If you are on your own or your parent's insurance, you may want to check with your insurance company before receiving the vaccine.

Vaccines for Children (VFC), a governmental program, will cover HPV vaccinations for children and teens under 19 years of age. VFC allows for children and teens to receive vaccination if their private health care insurance does not cover the cost (CDC, 2006).

## How do I schedule an appointment at UHS?

The University Health Service (UHS) offers a full range of health care services for men and women. UHS patients who are interested in receiving Gardasil®, the new HPV vaccine, are asked to call 275-2662 to schedule an appointment with their UHS primary care provider (PCP) or with one of the women's health nurse practitioners. All visits to University Health Service are confidential.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

### University Health Service

Appointments: 275-2662

<http://www.rochester.edu/uhs/>

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

[www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/STDFact\\_HPv-vaccine.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/STDFact_HPv-vaccine.htm)

[www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/hpv/hpv-faqs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/hpv/hpv-faqs.htm)

### American Social Health Association

1-800-227-8922

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

<http://www.ashastd.org/stdfaqs/hpv.html>

[http://www.ashastd.org/pdfs/HPV\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.ashastd.org/pdfs/HPV_factsheet.pdf)

### United States Department of Health and Human Services

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

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/news/english/533105.htm>

### American Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.org/docroot/home/index.asp>

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## REFERENCE:

(August, 2006). HPV Vaccine Questions & Answers. Retrieved November 13, 2006, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site:

[http://www.cdc.gov/std/healthcomm/fact\\_sheets.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/healthcomm/fact_sheets.htm)