

HPV vaccine: A shot to prevent cancer

Human papillomavirus is an illness that can cause cancer. There are many types of HPV, but only a few cause cancer of the mouth, throat or genitals of males and females. It is transmitted sexually. About 79 million people in the U.S. have HPV right now, and most do not know it. The good news is getting shots now can protect your child when they grow up.



Photo of girl by Christopher Futcher, vial by Dina2001, courtesy iStockphoto

Quick facts on HPV shots:

1 The HPV vaccine is a series of three shots. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that the shots be given to boys and girls around age 11 or 12. All three shots should be given within six months.



2 Teen girls and young women can get the HPV vaccine through age 26. Boys and young men can get the vaccine up to age 21. But earlier is best, because the vaccine is most effective when given before people have sex.

3 There are several brands of HPV vaccines. All of them will protect against the strains of HPV that most cervical and other cancers.



4 You might not feel comfortable thinking about your child's sexual future. But it is important to protect them before they face potential risks. The shots do not increase health risks.

5 The HPV vaccine is available from your doctor. CDC's Vaccines for Children program can help you if you cannot afford the shots or if you are not insured.

>> For more information on HPV vaccines, visit www.cdc.gov/hpv