



## **HPV Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is HPV?**

HPV stands for Human Papillomavirus, a virus that is typically transmitted sexually. This virus can result in cervical cancer in girls and women. It also can result in genital warts or lesions in the mouth or throat in both boys and girls, men and women.

### **Why do health professionals recommend a vaccine at such an early age?**

This vaccine, like most vaccines, works by “educating” the body about the virus before it is infected with an actual virus. To be effective, the vaccine has to be introduced into someone’s system, BEFORE the actual virus is introduced. Several nationally recognized studies show that the majority of girls and boys are sexually active by the time they are 14 or 15 or even sooner. To be sure that girls are vaccinated before they become sexually active, it is best to administer the vaccine when they are young.

### **Is there a vaccine for boys?**

At the moment, there is no equivalent for boys and men, even though boys can be infected, can carry, and can transmit HPV. Several research organizations are working on a vaccine for boys and men but it is not clear when that will become available.

### **How does the vaccine work? Is it one shot or more than one?**

There are three shots that must be given in a series. The first vaccine is followed by a second vaccine after two months. The third and final vaccine shot is then given 4 months after that second shot. For example, if your daughter receives the first shot in January, she should receive the second in March, and the third in July.

### **What if my daughter misses one of those deadlines? Will the vaccine be effective, or do we have to start over with the first shot?**

Similar to the Hepatitis B vaccine, protection is not complete unless all three doses are administered within the timeframe recommended.

### **Is this series of vaccines safe?**

This vaccine was tested for more than 10 years on more than 25,000 girls and women worldwide, including more than 1,000 girls between 9 -15 years old. The health of more than 18,000 girls and young women who took the vaccine has been monitored, and none of them show HPV vaccine associated problems.

**Are there any side effects?**

The only reported side effect is soreness at the location on the arm where the vaccine is administered.

**Does my daughter need to begin the process in time for the 2008 school year or does she need to have completed the process in time for the 2009 school year?**

The law requires that your daughter get the first dose of the vaccine by the beginning of the 2009 school year.

**What happens if my daughter is not vaccinated?**

Your daughter will not be permitted to begin school in fall 2009 without either documentation that she has had the first of three doses, or official documentation of your decision to “opt out” of the vaccine.

**What does opting out mean?**

In this case, it means that you choose the option of not having your daughter vaccinated.

**What kind of documentation do I need? And where do I get those documents?**

The D.C. Department of Health is developing a form that will enable parents to opt their daughters out of the vaccination program

**Can I opt out for reasons other than religious?**

You can “opt out” of the vaccination for any reason, however, you must have written documentation of your decision to “opt out” available for school officials.

**How much will this cost?**

The series of vaccines costs \$120 per dose, or \$360 for the series.

**Will my insurance pay for it?**

Through the Vaccine For Children Program (VFC) the costs of the HPV vaccine are covered for Medicaid eligible, uninsured, or underinsured children 18 years of age and younger. Ask if your health care provider participates in the VFC Program. Most large insurance plans usually cover the costs of recommended vaccines. You need to call your insurance company to find out how they cover this vaccine.

**Where can I get the vaccine?**

Your child's physician can administer the vaccine for you. If you do not have a physician, and you are uninsured or underinsured, you can obtain the vaccine through a VFC provider which includes Federally Qualified Health Centers and the Department of Health Express Immunization Clinics. If you receive primary care at a Children's Health Center location, you can also make an appointment for a vaccine with any of Children's six health centers. If you have another physician but would like to come to one of our health centers, you will need to first call your insurance to change your primary care provider prior to making an appointment.

**How do I set up an appointment to do that?**

To contact a Department of Health Express Immunization Clinic call (202) 576-7130. To make an appointment for the Children's Health Center (ages 0 to 12 years) at CNMC call 202-476-2123. For the Adolescent Health Center (ages 12 years and older) call 202-476-5464 to make an appointment. The numbers for Children's community health centers in NW and SE are:

CHC @ Comp/Shaw: 202-476-5500

CHC @ Morgan: 202-476-5580

CHC @ Good Hope Rd: 202-476-6900

CHC @ Martin Luther King: 202-476- 6575

CHC @ THEARC 202-436-3060

**I have younger daughters, at what age should I start vaccinating my children?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (**CDC**) recommends that the vaccine be given to girls ages 11 to 12. The CDC also notes that the vaccine can be administered to girls as young as 9 years old.

**Will the vaccine be covered for my older daughters?**

Yes, you can also vaccinate older girls. The cost is covered by public insurance programs, like Medicaid, for girls up to age 21, and by most private insurance companies.

**Why does Children's National Medical Center support the policy to vaccinate all young girls?**

At Children's National we firmly believe in family centered care, and respect parents' role in helping their children make good health choices. We also recognize that an epidemic of HPV presents serious risks to the health of the girls and boys – and the women and men – in our community.

If there is a safe vaccine to help combat an infection that can lead to a deadly form of cancer, then we want to help educate and inform and make that vaccine accessible. We do this without judgment about anyone's lives or lifestyle. At Children's National, we care and advocate on behalf of the health and future well being of all children.