

Patient Information about Gardasil®

What is HPV?

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is one of the most common sexually transmitted viruses in the United States (US) estimated to affect 20 million people. Although it is sexually transmitted, it is important to note that HPV is not like HIV or herpes. It does not cause the same health problems or symptoms, nor is it treated in the same manner. There are over 35 different types of HPV linked to infection of the genital tract. In most people who are infected with HPV the body's immune system is able to clear the infection. Persistent infections can lead to genital warts, precancerous lesions, and, if left untreated, cervical cancer.

Who gets HPV?

Any man or woman who takes part in any kind of sexual activity that involves genital contact is at risk for acquiring HPV. Approximately ¾ of people in the US between the ages of 15 – 49 will be infected with HPV in their lifetime. Because HPV infection has no symptoms, people may transmit the virus to others without knowing it.

What are genital warts, precancerous lesions, and cervical cancer?

HPV infection is involved in 99.7% of all precancerous and cancerous lesions of the cervix. Not all HPV types cause these conditions, but certain specific HPV types can change the cells in the lining of the cervix from normal to precancerous. If precancerous lesions are left untreated they can progress to cancer. HPV 16 and 18 are thought to cause ~70% of cervical cancers.

Genital warts are skin-colored growths found on the outside or inside of the genitals. They can itch, hurt, and cause discomfort. They are usually not precancerous and ~90% are caused by HPV 6 and 11.

What is Gardasil® and what is it used for?

Gardasil® is an injection that helps protect against diseases caused by the HPV types in the vaccine (6, 11, 16, and 18). These diseases include:

- Cervical cancer
- Abnormal or precancerous cervical lesions
- Abnormal or precancerous vaginal lesions
- Abnormal or precancerous vulvar lesions
- Genital warts

It is important to understand that Gardasil® will help prevent these diseases...it *is not* a treatment. It is also important to remember that 30 % of cervical cancer and 10% of genital warts are caused by HPV types not contained in this vaccine.

Gardasil® can be given to women already infected with HPV, but it will not protect against a viral type to which a woman has already been exposed. Furthermore, it will not protect women who are exposed to HPV types not included in the vaccine.

How is Gardasil® given?

Gardasil® is given as an injection in 3 separate doses:

- First dose: given at a time convenient to you and your physician
- Second dose: given 2 months after the 1st dose
- Third dose: given 6 months after the 1st dose

Who should receive Gardasil®?

The FDA has approved the use of Gardasil® in girls and women ages 9 – 26 years-old. Anyone who is allergic to the vaccine's ingredients or has an allergic reaction to the first dose of the vaccine should not receive Gardasil®. Prior to receiving the vaccine inform your doctor about:

- a current pregnancy or if you are planning to get pregnant
- a weakened immune system (such as HIV)
- a recent fever greater than 100° F
- a history of bleeding and cannot receive injections

I acknowledge that I have read the above information and have discussed the benefits and risks of receiving the Gardasil® vaccine with my physician. I understand that the vaccine does not prevent infection of all HPV types and therefore only prevents ~70% of cervical cancers and ~90% of genital warts. I further understand that this vaccine should be received prior to being exposed to HPV and it will not protect against prior HPV infections. Gardasil® will not protect against other sexually transmitted disease and is not a form of birth control. Receiving the vaccine still requires cervical cancer screening.