HPV: Vaccination Rates Increase and Infection Rate Decreases

By Margaret Leer [1]
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Human papillomavirus, known as HPV, is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States and a principal cause of cervical cancer. The Food and Drug Administration has approved, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended, two HPV vaccines—Cervarix and Gardasil. Both prevent certain types of HPV that cause cervical cancer. Since the vaccine was introduced in 2006, the prevalence of the vaccine-type HPV has dropped by 56 percent.

Human papillomavirus, known as HPV, is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States and a principal cause of cervical cancer.

- About 79 million Americans, the majority of whom are in their late teens or early 20s, are infected with HPV.1
- Most people who become infected don’t even know it. In many cases, those infected do not develop any symptoms and the body’s immune system clears HPV naturally in about 90 percent of cases.
- About 40 types of HPV can infect both men and women. Most HPV types cause no symptoms and go away on their own. But some types are associated with several kinds of cancers and can cause genital warts in both men and women.2

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- Cervarix prevents two HPV types, 16 and 18, which cause 70 percent of cervical cancers.
- Gardasil prevents four HPV types: HPV 16 and 18, and HPV 6 and 11, which cause 90 percent of genital warts.4
- Gardasil also protects males against most genital warts and anal cancers.
- Both vaccines are highly effective in preventing the targeted HPV types, as well as the most common health problems caused by them.4
- The HPV vaccine is given in a series of three doses and the best way to get protected is to complete all three doses before becoming sexually active.
- The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends administering the vaccine to girls between ages 11 and 12, before they become sexually active.
- The advisory committee also recommends the vaccine for boys between ages 11 and 12 and in men ages 22-26 if they have not been previously vaccinated.
- In 2011, 53 percent of females in the United States ages 13 to 17 had received one or more doses, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data; that’s an increase from 44.3 percent in 2009.

The number of teenage girls who have been vaccinated has increased in the U.S. since 2009.
Over a two-year period, from 2009 to 2011, the percentage of girls 13 to 17 with at least one dose of the HPV vaccine increased by almost 20 percent in the U.S.

During the same time period, the percentage of girls 13 to 17 who received all three doses of the HPV vaccine increased by 30 percent.

Despite the overall increase in the country, in four states—Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas and Massachusetts—the percentage of females vaccinated with one or more doses and all three doses decreased from 2009 to 2011.

Colorado and Kansas had a more than 20 percent decrease in females who received all three doses of the vaccine. In New Mexico and North Dakota, three-dose vaccination rates fell by 16 and 12 percent respectively.

The HPV vaccine has produced positive results according to a June 2013 study.

- Since the vaccine was introduced in 2006, the prevalence of the vaccine-type HPV has dropped by 56 percent.\(^6\)
- A study by the Journal of Infectious Diseases showed the types of HPV that could be prevented by vaccine were 3.1 percent among vaccinated females and 12.6 percent among those who were unvaccinated.\(^7\)
- CDC Director Tom Frieden was quoted on the CDC website regarding this new data: “This report shows that HPV vaccine works well, and the report should be a wake-up call to our nation to protect the next generation by increasing HPV vaccination rates.”\(^8\)

Only Virginia and the District of Columbia mandate the HPV vaccinations for certain school-aged girls.

- Virginia (S 1230) and the District (B 17-0030) require the vaccine for girls to enter the sixth grade, but parents may opt out for religious, medical or moral reasons.
- During the 2013 legislative sessions, three states considered legislation that would require the HPV vaccination.
  - Florida’s SB 146\(^4\), which would have required girls entering the sixth grade to receive the vaccine, died in committee in May 2013.
  - Kentucky’s HB 358\(^5\) requiring the vaccine for girls entering sixth grade passed the House in early 2013 and was sent to the Senate in February 2013. The Senate, however, never voted on it, and the bill died at the end of the session.
  - New York’s AB 2067\(^6\) requiring the vaccine for school attendance of children born after Jan. 1, 1996, was sent to committee in January 2013, but has not yet been considered.

References:

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “HPV Vaccine Information for Young Women-Fact Sheet.”
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “HPV Vaccine Information for Young Women-Fact Sheet.”
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