

FAQs about the New HPV Vaccine

What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is a common virus. There are many different strains of HPV -- some cause no harm and others can cause diseases of the genital area. HPV can develop into cervical cancer, precancerous lesions, or genital warts, depending on the HPV type and location.

In 2005, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that 20 million people in the United States had this virus. Recent statistics show that 1 out of 4 people between the ages of 16-24 have HPV; many do not know they have it.

Who is at risk for Human Papillomavirus?

The CDC (2005) estimates that at least 50% of sexually active people catch HPV during their lifetime. Any person of any age or sexual orientation who engages in sexual activity that involves genital contact is at risk. Many people who have HPV may not show any signs or symptoms. This means that they can pass on the virus to others and not know it.

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

Certain type of HPV can cause the cells in the lining of the *cervix* to change from normal to precancerous lesions. If these are not treated, they can turn cancerous. *Genital warts* often appear as skin-colored growths. They are found on the inside or outside of the genitals. They may hurt, itch, bleed, and/or cause discomfort, but are most often asymptomatic. These lesions are usually not precancerous and are treatable with medication.

What is the HPV vaccine and what is it used for?

The new HPV vaccine has the brand name GARDASIL. GARDASIL is series of 3 injections (shots) that helps protect against the diseases caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Types in the vaccine (6, 11, 16, and 18) including:

- Cervical cancer (cancer of the lower end of the uterus or womb)
- Abnormal and precancerous cervical and vaginal lesions
- Abnormal and precancerous vulvar lesions
- Genital warts

GARDASIL helps *prevent* these diseases – but it will not treat them.

Why can females only receive GARDASIL?

At this time, GARDASIL is FDA approved for use in females 9 through 26 years of age. This is because it has been tested only on females. GARDASIL is currently undergoing clinical trials on males, but has not yet been approved for use in men.

Where can I get the GARDASIL vaccine, and what is the cost?

GARDASIL is a series of three shots (0, 2, and 6 months apart) administered by most health care providers. UCSC students can get GARDASIL at the UCSC Student Health Center. The cost is \$150 per shot and insurance may not reimburse you. For questions about whether your Student Health Insurance Plan will cover some of the cost, call the Insurance office at 459-4480. To make an appointment to get GARDASIL at the Health Center, call the Appointment Desk at 831-459-2500.

Will GARDASIL help me if I already have Human Papillomavirus?

You may benefit from GARDASIL even if you already have HPV. This is because most people are not infected with all four types of HPV contained in the vaccine. In clinical trials, individuals with current or past infection with one or more vaccine-related HPV types prior to vaccination were protected from disease caused by the remaining vaccine HPV types. Talk to your health care professional for more information about your personal history.

What are the possible side effects of GARDASIL?

GARDASIL is generally well tolerated by those who receive the vaccine. The most commonly reported side effects include:

- Pain, swelling, itching, and redness at the injection site
- Fever
- Difficulty breathing (bronchospasm) has been reported very rarely.

If you have any unusual or severe symptoms after receiving GARDASIL, contact your health care professional right away.

If you would like more information about GARDASIL, please talk to your health care professional or visit www.gardasil.com.

References: http://www.merck.com/product/usa/pi_circulars/g/gardasil/gardasil_ppi.pdf

<http://www.cdc.gov>