

FAQs about the HPV Vaccine

What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is a common virus. There are many different strains of HPV. Some strains cause no harm and others can cause diseases of the genital or oral area. Depending on the strain of HPV and the location, HPV can cause genital warts, precancerous lesions or even cancers.

In January 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that 79 million people in the United States had some strain of HPV with an estimated 14 million new infections each year. 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 is the HPV vaccine and what is it used for?

The HPV vaccine has the brand name *GARDASIL*. It is recommended for all people up to the age of 26. *GARDASIL* is series of 3 injections (shots) that helps protect against 9 strains of HPV known to cause serious diseases. These 9 strains can cause problems such as:

- Cervical cancer (cancer of the lower end of the uterus or womb)
- Abnormal and precancerous cervical lesions (causing abnormal paps)
- Abnormal vaginal lesions and vaginal cancer
- Abnormal and precancerous vulvar lesions and vulvar cancer
- Genital warts
- Anal cancer and precursors
- Oropharyngeal cancer
- Penile cancer and precursors

GARDASIL helps *prevent* these diseases. *GARDASIL* does not treat these diseases.

What are genital warts?

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 can be treated with medication.

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 your health care provider. UCSC students can get *GARDASIL* at the UCSC Student Health Center. The vaccination is completely covered by UCSHIP insurance. Without insurance the vaccine can cost as much as \$150. Most insurance companies cover this fee in full. If you have private insurance you should talk to your PCP about getting this vaccine at your private provider's office.

Will *GARDASIL* help me if I already have Human Papillomavirus?

You may benefit from *GARDASIL* even if you have already been exposed to HPV. This is because most people are not infected with all four of the HPV strains 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/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/>