

## **HPV & HPV Vaccine: 8 Facts**

**Here's what you need to know about Gardasil.**

Gardasil, the new vaccine against human papilloma virus (HPV) -- which causes cervical cancer and genital warts -- is now available nationwide.

Here is what you need to know now about this new vaccine.

### **1. What is Gardasil?**

Gardasil is a vaccine, licensed for use in June 2006, by the FDA. It targets four strains of human papillomavirus (HPV) -- HPV-6, 11, 16, and 18. HPV-16 and HPV-18 account for about 70% of all cervical cancers. HPV-6 and -11 cause about 90% of genital warts. HPV is also linked to anal cancer.

### **2. How does HPV spread?**

Sexual activity spreads the virus, a very common one. It's one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in the country, according to the CDC, with more than 20 million people currently infected and another 6.2 million contracting the virus each year.

### **3. Who should get the vaccine?**

Gardasil is approved by the FDA for girls and women ages 9 to 26. The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that the vaccine be given routinely to girls at age 11 to 12 years old, although doctors may choose to vaccinate girls as young as 9. The CDC also recommends the vaccine for women age 13 to 26 who did not receive the vaccine at an earlier age.

However, if a girl or woman is already infected with HPV, the vaccine will not prevent that strain of HPV from causing disease. It will protect against new infections with other strains of HPV included in the vaccine.

The vaccine is being studied in males, too. Men can get HPV infections and can pass the virus to their sex partners. HPV causes genital warts and is associated with rare cases of cancer of the penis. Merck is currently testing Gardasil in men.

### **4. Does Gardasil protect against all cervical cancers?**

No. The vaccine does protect against the strains of HPV most likely to cause cancer. But it does not protect against all HPV strains.

However, recent reports suggest that the vaccine may give wider protection than originally thought. There is preliminary evidence it may offer some protection against other HPV strains, which cause 8% or 9% of cervical cancers.

### **5. If someone is already sexually active, will this vaccine still work?**

If a person has been infected with any of the four strains the vaccine protects against, the vaccine won't provide protection against that type. But it will prevent infection from the other three.

### **6. Is it available at UB Health Services? What does the vaccine cost? Will insurance cover it?**

Yes, UB Health Services offers the HPV vaccine for \$125 per dose and three doses are needed. Payment is expected at the time of the appointment; however, we encourage students to contact their insurance plan to determine if they will cover the expense. If your insurance covers the vaccine, you will be given a receipt from Health Services that you can submit to your insurance company for reimbursement.

### **7. Will the new vaccine make cervical cancer screens such as the Pap test passé?**

No. Screening with a Pap test is still needed, since the vaccine does not protect against all cervical cancer.

### **8. How common is cervical cancer and how deadly?**

The American Cancer Society predicts that in 2007, there will be about 11,150 new U.S. cases of invasive cervical cancer, and 3,670 cervical-cancer deaths. Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women worldwide.

Excerpted and edited from a WebMD Feature written by [Kathleen Doheny](#) and reviewed by [Louise Chang, MD](#)