

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Genital (sex organ) Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection. It is spread by skin-to-skin sexual contact. HPV is so common that most sexually active people will get it during their life-time. Most HPV infections cause no symptoms and go away on their own. However, infection with the virus can lead to cervical cancer in women. It can also cause other oral and genital cancers in men and women. HPV also causes genital warts. Each year, HPV causes more than 26,000 new cases of cancer in both men and women.

Vaccination is the best way to prevent HPV infection. All boys and girls ages 11 or 12 years should get vaccinated. By vaccinating at this age, preteens will be protected before any exposure to the virus occurs. We also know the vaccine produces a better immune response in preteens this age. There are two vaccines available to protect against HPV infection. The HPV vaccines are given in three doses over six months. It is important to get all three shots. The HPV vaccine is safe to give at the same time as other recommended vaccines. Older teens and young adults can receive the vaccine through age 26.

The HPV vaccines are very safe and highly effective. Both vaccines offer protection against HPV types 16 & 18. The vaccine is 93% effective in preventing precancers of the cervix caused by these types of HPV. One of the vaccines also offers protection from genital warts. The vaccines offer long-last protection from HPV. Current studies show that protection from HPV from the vaccine lasts at least 8 years. There is no evidence of waning protection after that time. These vaccines have also been studied very carefully for safety. Serious effects are very rare. Preteens and teens should always sit or lie down for about 15 minutes after receiving any vaccines to prevent fainting.

The vaccine does not protect against all types HPV known to cause cervical cancer. It is important that women continue to receive routine cervical cancer screenings (pap test). It is also important to follow-up on all abnormal results. The Pap test can find abnormal cells on the cervix, so that they can be removed before cancer develops. There are no tests currently available to find HPV in other parts of the body.

Please contact your healthcare provider if you have questions about the HPV vaccine. This information is provided by the Indiana State Department of Health as required by Public Law 80 (Senate Enrolled Act 327) of 2007. Questions may be directed to the Indiana State Department of Health Immunization Program at (800)701-0704.

For more information on HPV and the vaccine, please visit:

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) HPV website: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/default.htm>

CDC HPV Vaccine Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/>

Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) HPV Website: <http://www.vaccineinformation.org/hpv/>

Yours in Health,

The Indiana State Department of Health Immunization Division