

Fact Sheet

## Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

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1. ***What is HPV and the complications of illnesses caused by HPV?***

HPV is a highly contagious virus that is spread by skin-to-skin contact. It can infect the skin, mouth, rectum, anus, cervix, the skin on the penis, the area around the vagina and the lining of the vagina. HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections and it is easily spread through any kind of intimacy that involves genital contact - not just intercourse. HPV commonly affects teenagers and young adults. It is estimated that 70% of Canadians will have at least one HPV infection over their lifetime. While most HPV infections go away on their own some remain and create a risk for a variety of cancers.

There are over 100 types of HPV and some can lead to health problems such as warts on the hands and feet, genital warts, head and neck cancers, cervical cancer and cancer of the vagina, vulva, anus and penis. Certain types of HPV cause almost all cases of cervical cancer. There are over 2100 HPV related cancers in females and over 560 in males in Canada per year. In addition, there are more than 47,000 cases of other HPV related disease. About 400 women in Canada die each year from HPV related cancer and an average of seven women are diagnosed with cervical cancer on PEI yearly.

2. ***What is HPV Vaccine and what does it contain?***

The HPV vaccine used in PEI is an inactive (dead) vaccine that helps protect against the diseases caused by HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18. It works best when given before the person becomes sexually active. When given at this young age, the immunity level achieved is known to be very strong. A **series of three doses** is recommended at intervals of 0, 2, and 6 months. It is not yet known how long protection will last after immunization but at present no boosters are necessary.

The vaccine contains highly purified inactive proteins from HPV types 6, 11, 16, and 18. When administered it causes the body to make antibodies against these HPV types. The vaccine also contains traces of amorphous aluminum hydroxyphosphate sulphate (to improve the body's ability to form antibodies), sodium chloride and water for injection. There is no mercury in the vaccine.

This vaccine provides protection against 70% of HPV that cause cervical cancer and 90% of HPV related anal cancers and genital warts. The vaccine does not treat these diseases once a person contracts them.

3. ***What are the possible reactions from the vaccine?***

The most serious but rare side effect is a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) which can be life threatening and usually occurs within 15 - 20 minutes of receiving the vaccine. Procedures are in place for the nurse to quickly respond to anaphylaxis. Those who receive the vaccine are asked to remain in the waiting area for 15 minutes after immunization.

The most common side effect is soreness around the injection site. Minor side effects may include localized swelling, redness and itching at the injection site. Other side effects may include headache, fever, dizziness and/or nausea. It is not necessary to give acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol or Temptra) with every immunization. However, if your child is experiencing discomfort or fever, acetaminophen can relieve these symptoms.

See a doctor or seek medical attention if your child has any serious side effects. Report serious reactions to the public health nurse whenever they occur.

4. ***When should the vaccine not be given?***

- 1) Those who are allergic to any contents of the vaccine should not receive this vaccine.
- 2) Those who had an anaphylactic reaction after getting a previous dose of the vaccine.
- 3) Those who are ill and have a fever above 38.5°C (or 101.3° F) should return for their immunization at a later date.

5. ***What are the risks if the vaccine is not received?***

HPV infection is very common, and while most HPV infections go away by themselves, those that persist are more likely to develop into cancer. Some types of HPV create a risk for cervical cancer in women and for anal cancer in both men and women.

At least one in 10 Canadians will develop genital warts in their lifetime, and though warts caused by the virus can be treated, they are difficult to remove and often come back after treatment. Genital warts spread to two-thirds of people who come into contact with them and have significant psychosocial impact in those who are affected.

6. ***Should those who receive HPV vaccine continue to have regular screening done ?***

Yes, those who have received the HPV vaccine should have regular screening and testing done as recommended by their health care provider. For example, males and females who have been advised to have anal cancer screening are recommended to follow the advice of their health care provider to continue that screening.

Women should have Pap smears at the appropriate intervals. This is because the vaccine provides protection against 70% of those human papillomaviruses that cause cervical cancer, and a woman can become infected with one or more of the other 30% of these viruses that do cause cervical cancer.