UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

Getting HPV vs. Getting Vaccinated

(HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS)

We all want to make the best health choices for our children. So how risky is HPV compared to the vaccine that prevents HPV?

HPV FAST FACTS

HOW CONTAGIOUS?

Highly contagious. About 13 million people, including teens, become infected with HPV every year. Even deep (French) kissing can pass the virus.[1,2,3,4]

HOW SERIOUS?

HPV goes away on its own for 9 out of 10 people. But for 10%, HPV can be very serious, including causing certain types of cancer.[1,5]

Every year, HPV causes 37,000 cases of cancer in the United States.[6]

VACCINE FAST FACTS

99%

HOW EFFECTIVE?

When a child is vaccinated in their early teens, the vaccine is about 99% effective at protecting against strains of HPV that cause most HPV-related cancers. But the effectiveness decreases if a person is vaccinated in their 20s.[7,8,9]

HOW SAFE?

Generally, for every 1 million HPV vaccines administered in the United States, only about 3 doses will result in a severe allergic reaction.[10]

18 YEARS

SAFETY RECORDS

HPV vaccines have been used in the United States since 2006. More than 135 million doses have been safely administered.[7,9,10]

MYTHS VS. FACTS

MYTH BUSTER

Does your child need the HPV vaccine if they are not sexually active? Yes. The reason the vaccine is recommended at ages 11 or 12 is because the vaccine gives the best protection against certain cancers when it's given before any exposure to HPV.[7,11,12,13]

Five separate safety systems continuously monitor all vaccines for as long as the vaccines are given.[14]

Learn more at hhs.gov/immunization/basics/safety/index.html.

COMPARING THE TWO

HPV	VACCINE TO PREVENT HPV
Common Mild to Moderate Symptoms and Common Side Effects[10,15]	
For most people, HPV will go away on its own and they may not even know they have it. But they can pass it on to others.	Common side effects of the vaccine to prevent HPV are usually mild and last 1–2 days. If side effects occur, they can include: • Soreness, redness, or swelling where the vaccine was given • Fever • Dizziness or fainting • Nausea • Headache • Tiredness • Muscle or joint pain
Rare, More Serious Symptoms or Complications and Rare Side Effects[7,10,15]	
Serious symptoms or complications of HPV vary and can include: • Cervical cancer • Oropharyngeal cancers (throat, tongue, and tonsils) • Anal cancer • Penile cancer • Rectal cancer • Vaginal cancer • Vulvar cancer • Genital warts	Serious side effects of the vaccine to prevent HPV vary and can include: • Severe allergic reaction (generally, for every 1 million HPV vaccines administered in the United States, only about 3 doses will result in a severe allergic reaction)

Sources:

1. Cleveland Clinic: https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/11901-hpv-human-papilloma-virus
2. Mount Sinai: https://www.mountsinai.org/locations/head-neck-institute/cancer/oral/hpv-faqs
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4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/about
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6. CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/cases.html
7. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists: https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2020/08/human-papillomavirus-vaccination
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