

# Human Papillomavirus Vaccine

Keep your child and yourself safe. By getting all vaccines on time, you and your child can be protected from many vaccine preventable diseases over your lifetimes. Immunizations have saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

## What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

- HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs). There are over 100 types of HPV.
- HPV types 16 and 18 can cause mouth, nose, throat and anal cancers in males and females, cervical and vaginal cancers in females and penile cancer in males.
- HPV types 6 and 11 cause over 90% of genital warts in females and males.
- It is estimated that 75% of sexually active females and males will have at least one HPV infection during their lifetime, with the highest prevalence observed in women aged 20-24 years.
- HPV is spread by close contact during sexual activity with someone who has HPV.

## What can happen when a person has a HPV infection?

- Most people do not show any signs or symptoms and can pass HPV on to others without knowing it.
- Usually, a HPV infection will go away on its own. For some people, the body cannot fight the HPV infection and the infected cells can develop cancer.

## How can HPV infections be prevented?

- Anyone who is sexually active can get a HPV infection.
- Abstinence from all sexual activity is the only way to prevent getting or spreading a HPV infection.
- Delay sexual activity (wait until you are older).
- Get vaccinated against HPV. The vaccine is almost 100% effective against four of the most common types of HPV.
- Limit the number of sexual partners you have and always use condoms.

## What are the benefits of the HPV vaccine?

In women who have never been infected with 4 specific types of HPV (6, 11, 16, 18), the vaccine:

- Prevents 7 out of 10 cases of cervical cancer.
- Prevents 9 out of 10 cases of genital warts.
- The vaccine prevents HPV infection but it does not get rid of it once the infection occurs.

## Who can get the vaccine free of charge in Saskatchewan?

- The Gardasil™ brand of HPV vaccine is provided **free to girls in grade 6** because they are best protected before they become sexually active.

### Notes:

- Females born since January 1, 1996 who missed getting Gardasil™ in grade 6 can get it for free by making an appointment at the local health centre.
- HPV vaccines are recommended for other individuals, but are not available for free in Saskatchewan. Individuals can speak with their health care provider about privately purchasing HPV vaccines.

## Who should not get the vaccine?

**A mild illness, with or without fever, is not a reason to avoid immunization.**

- Individuals who have a serious illness, with or without fever, should delay immunization.
- People who have had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine, or to any of the vaccine components.
- Pregnant women.

## What are possible reactions to the vaccine?

**Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get HPV infection.**

Common reactions may include:

- Soreness, redness and swelling at the injection site
- Headache or a fever.
- These reactions are mild and may last 1 to 2 days.
- It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number. This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in one million people who get the vaccine.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol®, Tempra®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (Aspirin®) should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye's syndrome.

## Who should you report reactions to?

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your doctor, or nurse practitioner as soon as possible.

Talk to your public health nurse if:

- You have questions or concerns about your or your child's reaction to immunization.
- You had to take your child to a doctor, hospital or health centre with an illness that might be related to immunization.

## What does the vaccine contain?

- GARDASIL® contains HPV types 6, 11, 16, and 18. It also contains amorphous aluminum hydroxyphosphate sulphate, sodium chloride, L-histidine, polysorbate 80, sodium borate and water for injection. The vaccine is latex free and does not contain preservatives or antibiotics.

*Individual's immunization information will be recorded in the electronic provincial immunization registry, known as Panorama.*

*Recorded information will be used to:*

- *Manage immunization records.*
- *Notify you if you or your child needs an immunization.*
- *Monitor how well vaccines work in preventing vaccine preventable diseases.*

*Your immunization records may also be shared with health care professionals in order to provide public health services; assist with diagnosis and treatment; and to control the spread of vaccine preventable diseases.*

**For more information contact your local public health office, your physician, nurse practitioner or HealthLine at 811.**

**It is very important for women to get regular Pap tests once they become sexually active, because the vaccine does not protect against all cancers of the cervix.**

**The HPV vaccine does not protect against other sexually transmitted infections.**