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Health Department

FACTS&details

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Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

February 2014

What is HPV?

HPV is short for human papillomavirus. This virus can cause changes in the cervix and can lead to cervical cancer. Almost all (99%) cervical cancers are related to HPV. Each year in the US, approximately 10,000 women get cervical cancer, and approximately 4,000 die from it. Cervical cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among women around the world. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), HPV is a very common virus, as more than 14 million people are infected each year. More than half of sexually active men and women are infected with HPV at some point in their lives.

Like other viruses, there are more than 100 HPV strains. Some types cause warts, or papillomas. About 60 HPV types cause common warts on the skin, such as the hands and feet. The other 40 HPV types are "mucosal," which means they most often live in the genital areas. HPV is transmitted by direct contact; it is **not** spread through bodily fluids, nor does it live in blood or organs. Often there are no symptoms to HPV, and although there is no cure for the infection, symptoms can be treated.

What about the HPV vaccine?

There are currently two licensed HPV vaccines, Gardasil, licensed in 2006, and Cervarix, licensed in 2009. Both vaccines protect against two types of HPV that cause 70% of all cervical cancers. Gardasil also protects against vaginal and vulvar cancer in females and genital warts in males.

The vaccine has been tested and is expected to have long-lasting protection. The vaccine is not a substitute for cervical cancer screening. Women should still get regular Pap tests.

Who should be vaccinated and when?

To be most effective, the HPV vaccine should be given before a person becomes sexually active. The HPV vaccine is given as a three-dose series. The second dose is given two months after the initial dose and the final dose is given six months after the initial dose. The vaccine is recommended for girls and boys 11-12 years of age. Catch up vaccination is also recommended for girls and women 13-26 years of age who did not receive it when they were younger. Gardasil may also be given to males

age 9-26 years of age. Persons interested in HPV should consult their health care provider about the vaccine.

Who should not get HPV vaccine or wait?

Anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to yeast, to any other component of the HPV vaccine, or to a previous dose of the HPV vaccine should not get the vaccine. Tell your doctor if you have any severe allergies.

Pregnant women should not get the vaccine. The vaccine appears to be safe for both the mother and the unborn baby, but it is still being studied. Receiving the HPV vaccine when pregnant is not a reason to consider terminating the pregnancy. Women who are breast feeding may safely get the vaccine.

People who are mildly ill when they receive the shot can still get the HPV vaccine. People with moderate or severe illness should wait until they recover.

What is the cost and is it covered by insurance?

The cost for the three-dose series is approximately \$555.87 at the Health Department (2716 W Central). The Sedgwick County Health Department also serves uninsured, program-eligible children through the Vaccine for Children (VFC) program. To learn more about the VFC program call the Health Department at 316-660-7300. Private health care providers and other community clinics may offer the HPV vaccine as well.

What is recommended to help protect from cervical cancer?

- * Early HPV vaccination
- * Annual cervical cancer screenings

For More Information

Contact the Sedgwick County Health Department at 316-660-7300 or visit the Sedgwick County website at www.sedgwickcounty.org.