

Cervical Cancer Prevention and the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

A Fact Sheet from NEA HIN

What is the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and what is its relationship to cervical cancer?

HPV is the cause of over 99% of cervical cancers. An estimated 6.2 million new HPV infections occur every year among persons 14 - 44 years old.

HPV often resolves without treatment. However, it can result in pre-cancerous abnormalities, genital warts, and cervical cancer.

Annually, more than 11,100 cases of invasive cervical cancer are diagnosed in the U.S. and about 4,000 women die of the disease.

Cervical cancer disproportionately affects women of color and those who are economically disadvantaged. These women account for over 50% of the deaths from the disease.

Approximately 20 million Americans are currently infected with HPV. Most people who have HPV do not know they are infected.

About the Vaccine

The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends routine vaccination against HPV for females ages 11-12 years and a catch-up vaccination for females 13-26 not previously vaccinated.

In June 2006, the Food and Drug Administration approved the first HPV vaccine (Gardasil®) manufactured by Merck. A second vaccine (Cervarix™), which will be manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline, is expected to reach the market by 2008. Since HPV is a sexually transmitted infection (STI), the vaccine is most effective when administered prior to sexual debut.

In Gardasil®'s testing phase, the vaccine proved to be over 99% effective against the two HPV strains that cause approximately 70% of cervical cancers. Wide-spread vaccination, combined with regular Pap testing, will dramatically reduce the number of deaths from cervical cancer and the pain and suffering associated with cancer treatment.

Both men and women can get HPV - and pass it on - without even realizing it. Over half of sexually active men and women in the U.S. will have HPV at some time in their lives.

What is the extent of the problem?

As reported in The Journal of the American Medical Association:

- More than one-third of women in the U.S are infected with HPV by the time they are 24 years old.
- Nearly 85 percent of the women in the U.S who died last year from cervical cancer never had a Pap test.

Why is NEA HIN Involved?

At the 2006 RA, a New Business Item was adopted that read "The NEA, through the NEA Health Information Network, shall research and make available to NEA members and state/local affiliates information regarding the HPV vaccine, approved by the FDA on 6-8-06..."

What is NEA HIN doing?

HIN has been engaged in the battle against cervical and other cancers for more than a decade. HIN is committed to an educational campaign that adheres to the CDC's vaccine recommendations and that advocates for the prevention of cervical cancer.

In summation:

The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the United States, affecting over 20 million men and women throughout the nation.

HPV is now recognized as the major cause of nearly all cervical cancer. When combined with regular Pap screening, the new HPV vaccine can serve an important public health role by preventing most cervical cancers, pre-cancerous lesions and genital warts.

For More Information:

[Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)
[National Cancer Institute \(NCI\)](#)
[National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#)

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