

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

HPV is the leading cause of cervical cancer in women and is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. While cervical cancer screening has resulted in a 75% decrease in the incidence of cervical cancer in the U.S., there are still an average of 9,700 new cases and 3,700 deaths from cervical cancer each year. Fortunately, a vaccine to prevent the most virulent types of HPV has been developed.

CNMs and CMs must be prepared to administer the HPV vaccine to the women they serve and to answer questions from both women and the mothers of young teens who are eligible for this new vaccine.

HPV Vaccine:

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the licensing of a new vaccine to protect against HPV in June 2006. Shortly after this approval, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that this new vaccine, Gardasil, be routinely given to girls at the age of 11-12 years. Gardasil is a recombinant vaccine (contains no live virus) that is given as three injections over a six-month period. According to the ACIP's recommendation, 3 doses should be routinely given to girls when they are 11 or 12 years old, although the vaccination series can be started as early as 9 years of age at the discretion of the physician or health care provider. The vaccine should be administered before onset of sexual activity (i.e., before women are exposed to the viruses), but females who are sexually active should still be vaccinated. The ACIP recommendation also allows for vaccination of girls beginning at 9 years, and supports vaccination of females from 13 to 26 years of age who have not been previously vaccinated. For the ACIP recommendations, see <http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/STDFact-HPV-vaccine.htm>.

Gardasil, manufactured by Merck, is the first vaccine developed to prevent cervical cancer, precancerous genital lesions and genital warts due to HPV. The vaccine is highly effective against four types of HPV virus, including two, types 16 and 18, which cause about 70 percent of cervical cancer. It is also effective against HPV types 6 and 11, which cause approximately 90 percent of genital warts. Women who have not acquired HPV would get the full benefits of the vaccine. For more information about HPV and the HPV vaccine, please visit www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/hpv/default.htm. For more detailed information about the types of HPV, their clinical manifestations and the research studies conducted by Merck, please visit http://www.merck.com/newsroom/press_releases/product/2006_0608.html. And, for the CDC's updated HPV Vaccine Q&A to the general public, see http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/provisional_rec/hpv.pdf.

ACOG Recommendations:

In August, 2006, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) released clinical recommendations for the use of HPV vaccine, concurring with the ACIP's recommendations for females age 9-26 years. ACOG recommends that, although most ob-gyns do not see young girls age 11-12 years, the initial reproductive health visit by an adolescent is the ideal time to discuss the benefits of the vaccine and offer it to the teen. "Vaccination is also recommended for women up to age 26, regardless of sexual

activity. Ob-gyns are encouraged to talk about the vaccine any time they see a patient within the target population and offer it to those who have not yet received it. However, women who are already sexually active should be counseled that the vaccine may be less effective if there has been prior HPV exposure. While the vaccine has not been shown to have a harmful effect on pregnancy, it is not recommended that pregnant women be vaccinated. If a woman discovers she is pregnant during the vaccine schedule, she should delay finishing the series until after she gives birth. Women who are breastfeeding can receive the vaccine.” Despite the protection the vaccine offers, ACOG emphasizes that the recommendations for cervical cytology screening remain unchanged. For the full ACOG recommendation, see http://www.acog.org/departments/dept_notice.cfm?recno=7&bulletin=3945.

For more information on the use of HPV vaccine, see the package insert at <http://www.fda.gov/cber/label/hpvmer060806LB.pdf>.

Other Resources:

Vaccines for Children Program (VFC)

VFC helps families by providing free vaccines to health care providers who serve eligible children and is administered at the national level by the CDC through the National Immunization Program. CDC contracts with vaccine manufacturers to buy vaccines at reduced rates. The ACIP passed a resolution that included HPV vaccine in the VFC program. VFC-eligible children 9 through 18 years of age are entitled to receive VFC vaccine. For more information, visit the VFC page on the CDC web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/programs/immun10.htm>. Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

Society for Adolescent Medicine

The Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM) is a multi-disciplinary organization of health professionals who are committed to advancing the health and well-being of adolescents. SAM held a web cast on “HPV: Human Papilloma Virus: What You Need to Know” in March 2006, which contains information on how to talk to parents about the vaccine for their children. It is available at: www.adolescenthealth.org/cme/program_hpv .

FDA Office of Women’s Health

The Office of Women’s Health, a unit within the Office of the Commissioner of the FDA, serves as a champion for women's health both within and outside the agency. They provide an HPV Fact Sheet which can be printed and provided to patients at <http://www.fda.gov/womens/getthefacts/pdfs/hpv.pdf>.

Gynecological Cancer Foundation (GCF)

The mission of the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation (GCF) is to ensure public awareness of gynecologic cancer prevention, early diagnosis and proper treatment, as well as support research and training related to gynecologic cancers. For their information about cervical cancer and the HPV vaccine, visit <http://www.cervicalcancercampaign.org/>.

The “*QuickInfo*” series was developed by the Dept. of Professional Services to respond to common inquiries, summarizing ACNM resources regarding a particular topic, as well as listing selected literature and other resources. Feedback is welcomed; contact Professional Services at 240-485-1800 or info@acnm.org.

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