

Human papilloma virus vaccine (HPV)

Human papilloma virus (HPV) is the cause of cancer of the cervix in women. Every year in the U.S. about 10,000 women get cervical cancer and 3,700 die from it.

HPV also causes genital warts and warts in the respiratory tract, and is associated with several other less common cancers in both men and women. There are over 40 types of HPV. More than 50% of sexually active men and women are infected with HPV at some time during their lives. Fortunately, most HPV types are asymptomatic and go away on their own. But the types that cause cancer are a major concern.

HPV vaccine protects against 4 major types of HPV. These include 2 types that cause about 70% of cervical cancer and 2 types that cause about 90% of genital warts. HPV vaccine can prevent most genital warts and most cases of cervical cancer.

Protection from HPV vaccine is expected to be long-lasting. But vaccinated women still need cervical cancer screening because the vaccine does not protect against all HPV types that cause cervical cancer.

The vaccine is given in a three dose series. It is currently licensed for use in girls and women aged 9 to 26 years.