

(HPV Update, cont.)

screening programs. All cervical cancer is caused by HPV; about 95% of anal cancer is caused by HPV and 70% of oral cancers are caused by HPV. HPV Type 16 is usually the culprit.

Most of the HPV-positive non-cervical cancers develop in men.

Most high-risk HPV infections occur without any symptoms, go away within 1 to 2 years, and do not cause cancer. Some HPV infections, however, can persist for many years. Persistent infections with high-risk HPV types can, if untreated, lead to cancer.

The HPV positive person can infect anyone they have sexual contact with at any time. All forms of sexual contact (oral, anal, vaginal) can transmit the virus. A person can have an HPV infection without symptoms and when their only sexual contact was with an HPV-infected person many years prior.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved three vaccines to prevent HPV infection: Gardasil®, Gardasil® 9, and Cervarix®. These vaccines provide strong protection against **new** HPV infections, but they are not effective at treating established HPV infections or the diseases which are caused by HPV. The FDA recommends both boys and girls ages 9-11 be vaccinated.

Keep in mind, the most effective of the vaccines, Gardasil® 9, works on up to 9 types of HPV, but there are 35 which can live in the genital tract.

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/infectious-agents/hpv-vaccine-fact-sheet#q12>



COACHING EXERCISE!

Discussing HPV with your teens is important. They are VERY likely to be exposed to it if they have more than one lifetime partner. It doesn't matter if its 5 partners in one night or 5 partners over 5 years: the risk that they will be intimate with someone who is a carrier is very high.

What are the key things your teen needs to understand about HPV?

- #1 You can't tell if someone is infected by looking. And routine tests won't tell you if someone has been exposed previously. Tests only determine if someone has an ACTIVE infection.
- #2 The virus can be present without affecting the host, but produce a different reaction in a newly infected person. For instance, Jack may be an asymptomatic carrier. But when he infects Jill, she may produce an abnormal PAP test and require treatment to clear it.
- #3 As long as someone is not sexually active (no sexual contact at all — oral, anal vaginal) they are not at risk for HPV infection.
- #4 Once a person IS sexually active, they are at constant risk. Once a person is exposed to HPV, any vaccine will be significantly less effective, and will only work on HPV types which were not present at the time of the vaccination.
- #5 Once exposed to HPV, most people will clear the infection, but there is no way of knowing (if you are a carrier) for how long. It could be anywhere from 1 to 3 years, with a risk of infection for any sexual partner.

Review as often as opportunities present themselves!

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