



**January is National Cervical Health Awareness Month:  
How Much Do You Know About HPV Vaccinations?**

Special Thanks to the Immunization Program for developing the January Health Note

**Cervical Cancer, a Preventable Condition**

It is estimated that in 2011, 12,710 cases of invasive cervical cancer were diagnosed in the U.S. and 4,290 women died.<sup>1</sup> Cervical cancer was once one of the most common causes of cancer death among women in the US. But since the 1950's the number of deaths from cervical cancer has decreased by 70% as the result of the Pap test and institution of organized cervical cancer screening programs.

Cervical cancer is caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV). With the recent advent of the HPV vaccine, the incidence of cervical cancer can be reduced even more significantly. No one should die from this preventable condition.

HPV vaccinations, recommended at 11 – 12 years of age, are highly effective in protecting against the HPV types that cause 70% of cervical cancer and 90% of genital warts.<sup>2</sup>

Despite clear evidence that HPV vaccines are safe and effective, immunization rates remain low. In fact, in 2010, only 1 out of 3 adolescent females between 13 and 17 years of age had received the 3 recommended doses of HPV vaccine.<sup>3</sup> This finding prompted Dr. Ann Schuchat, Director of the National Center for Immunizations and Respiratory Diseases, to call on stakeholders to promote strategic and coordinated activities to increase HPV immunization rates.

**HPV and HPV Vaccines - True or False?**

Learn the facts about HPV vaccinations:

**1. HPV is a common infection that poses a serious threat to the health of Angelenos. TRUE**

- At least half of sexually active people will be infected with HPV over their lifetime.<sup>4</sup>
- HPV is the primary cause of cervical cancer. The vast majority of women who get HPV do not go on to develop cervical cancer.
- About 30% of people diagnosed with cervical cancer in the U.S. will die within 5 years. Mortality and incidence rates for cervical cancer are higher in Los Angeles County than nationally.<sup>5</sup>
- HPV can lead to genital warts and cancers of the vulva, vagina, penis, anus, and oropharynx.

**2. HPV vaccines are recommended for females only, not males. FALSE**

- Since 2006, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended HPV vaccinations for females at 11-12 years of age, with catch-up vaccinations through age 26 years. In 2011, the ACIP also recommended HPV vaccination for **males** at 11 -12 years of age, with catch up vaccinations through age 21, to prevent anal, oral, and other cancers and the spread of HPV to females.<sup>6</sup>

### **3. HPV vaccines cause serious adverse reactions. FALSE**

- No serious adverse reactions such as blood clots have been attributed to the vaccines. Pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site are the most common adverse reactions.

### **4. HPV prevents a sexually transmitted infection, so it is OK to delay vaccination until becoming sexually active. FALSE**

- HPV vaccination is recommended at 11-12 years of age because: a) it is most effective if received before sexual activity begins and b) the immune response to HPV vaccine is stronger at 11-12 years of age than in later adolescence.

### **5. Adolescents do not need parental consent to receive the HPV vaccine. TRUE**

- On January 1, 2012, a new state law went into effect in California that allows minors who are 12 years of age or older to consent to medical care related to the prevention of a sexually transmitted disease, including HPV vaccination.

### **Prevention Matters!**

Please promote this life-saving vaccine. HPV educational materials can be downloaded [here](#).

Refer clients to their regular provider for vaccination. Those without insurance coverage may be eligible for low-cost or no-cost vaccines through:

1. [The Vaccines for Children \(VFC\) program](#)
2. Vaccine patient assistance programs ([www.merck.com/merckhelps/vaccines/home.html](http://www.merck.com/merckhelps/vaccines/home.html) and [www.gskforyou.com/18\\_programs.htm](http://www.gskforyou.com/18_programs.htm))
3. [Public and community health centers](#)

Low income women can call the Office of Women's Health's multilingual hotline for free or low cost Pap test appointments and HPV vaccine referrals: 1-800-793-8090.

### **References**

1. National Cancer Institute. Available at: <http://cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/cervical>. Accessed on [January 9](#), 2012.
2. Quadrivalent Human Papillomavirus Vaccine. Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), 2007. MMWR. March 23, 2007; Vol. 56 (RR-2): 1-32.
3. CDC. National and state vaccination coverage among adolescents aged 13 through 17 years--- United States, 2010. MMWR. 2011;60:1117--23.
4. CDC. Human Papillomavirus (HPV) website. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/hpv/>. Accessed December 27, 2011.
5. Altekruse SF KC, Krapcho M, Neyman N, Aminou R, Waldron W, Ruhl J, Howlader N, Tatalovich Z, Cho H, Mariotto A, Eisner MP, Lewis DR, Cronin K, Chen HS, Feuer EJ, Stinchcomb DG, Edwards BK (eds). SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2007 Based on November 2009 SEER data submission. Available at: [http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975\\_2007/](http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975_2007/). Accessed January 8, 2011.
6. Recommendations on the Use of Quadrivalent Human Papillomavirus Vaccine in Males — Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), 2011. MMWR. Dec 23, 2011; 60(50):1705-1708.