



THIS VACCINE  
IS SINGULARLY  
ONE OF THE MOST  
POWERFUL  
PREVENTIVE  
TOOLS WE  
NOW HAVE IN  
COLLEGE HEALTH.

## > NEW VACCINE FOR WOMEN CAN HELP PREVENT STD AND CANCER

> BY LORI MORTIMER

**I**f you learned that scientists had developed a vaccine that can help prevent a very common sexually transmitted disease (STD) that's known to cause cancer, would you get vaccinated?

Earlier this year, the FDA licensed such a vaccine for girls and women ages 9-26. The goal of the vaccine, Gardasil, is to prevent cervical cancer in women by protecting them from four strains of a common viral STD, human papillomavirus (HPV).

- *Astonishingly, 75% of all women will have an HPV infection at some point in their lifetime.*

What's the connection between HPV and cervical cancer? HPV infection is the leading cause of cervical cancer. Astonishingly, 75% of all women will have an HPV infection at some point in their lifetime.

And what's the connection between college students and HPV? The majority of newly diagnosed HPV cases—75% of them—occur between the ages of 15 and 25.

### HPV Basics

HPV is an STD transmitted by skin-to-skin sexual contact; this includes vaginal and anal intercourse, as well as oral sex. Condoms reduce HPV infection by up to 70%, but you can still catch or transmit HPV even if you use a condom because condoms don't cover all the skin in the infected region.

- *HPV infection is the leading cause of cervical cancer.*

Over 100 strains of the HPV virus exist. Some strains cause genital warts, while others have no symptoms. Typically, the wart-causing strains are not linked to cervical cancer. But some of the symptom-free strains are linked to the disease, which kills over 3,000 women each year in the U.S. These strains are called "high-risk" strains.

> CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

### How Does the Vaccine Help?

The Gardasil vaccine covers two low-risk strains of HPV that cause 90% of genital warts and two high-risk strains of HPV that cause two-thirds of cervical cancer cases. Unfortunately, the vaccine doesn't protect against all the high-risk strains, so it's absolutely vital that women who get the Gardasil vaccine still get annual exams and Pap smears.

Still, "This vaccine is singularly one of the most powerful preventive tools we now have in college health," said Dr. James Turner, Executive Director of the Department of Student Health at the University of Virginia.

- *...it's absolutely vital that women who get the Gardasil vaccine still get annual exams and Pap smears.*

That's because HPV-related diseases are the most common sexually transmitted infections college health professionals deal with.

"Most major colleges with large health centers see hundreds of cases each year, devote lots of resources to evaluating and treating these conditions, and counsel women and their partners on the consequences of the infections," Turner said.

- *This summer, the University of Virginia vaccinated 85 incoming freshman women, Turner said. And during the fall semester, another 240 women have been vaccinated through the campus health center.*

These problems cause the students a lot of distress, he added.

Many schools now offer the vaccine through their student health centers. For example, this summer, the University of Virginia vaccinated 85 incoming freshman women, Turner said. And during the fall semester, another

240 women have been vaccinated through the campus health center.

### Who Should Get the Vaccine?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that females between the ages of 11 and 26 get the vaccine, whether they are sexually active or not.

*Do you think you'll get the HPV vaccine?*

**Tell us Your View.**

CLICK



The ideal time to get the vaccine is before becoming sexually active. But the CDC recommends that women under 26 who are already sexually active still get the vaccine because they will benefit from some protection.

Contact your campus health center or your health-care provider to learn more about the vaccine and whether or not it's right for you. 🚑

---

LORI MORTIMER IS THE EDITORIAL MANAGER OF *STUDENT HEALTH 101*™.

#### SOURCES

"HPV Vaccine Update: An ACHA Webcast," November 8, 2006, [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org)

"Detailed Guide: Cervical Cancer," August 4, 2006, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

"FDA Licenses New Vaccine for Prevention of Cervical Cancer and Other Diseases in Females Caused by Human Papillomavirus," June 8, 2006, [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)



RATE THIS STORY.



GIVE US SOME BACKTALK.



TELL US YOUR VIEW.



TELL US YOUR STORY.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A VACCINATION

**The Gardasil vaccine is administered in three injections over a six-month period. It's an expensive vaccine, with a total cost of \$360. Most insurance companies will cover the vaccine, but you should check with your provider to find out what your coverage is before getting vaccinated. Some students find that they're covered, but not if they get the vaccine at their campus health center.**

**Girls and women who are not yet sexually active will get the full protective benefit of the vaccination. Once someone has been infected with a strain of HPV that the vaccine covers, that person won't be protected from that strain.**

**But the CDC still recommends that all sexually active girls and women up to the age of 26 be vaccinated—even if they've had an abnormal pap smear—because the vaccine will still protect them against the other strains of HPV.**

