



Allentown Women's Center • toll free 877-342-5292

HPV & Gardasil Fact Sheet

What is HPV?

HPV stands for Human Papillomavirus. There are over 100 strands of HPV, each strand of the virus can have different effects on the body. Some of the strands of HPV are fairly harmless and the body's immune system is able to clear the virus. Some strands of the virus can lead to:

- Abnormal and precancerous cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cells and/or lesions.
- Cervical cancer
- Genital warts

How Common is HPV?

HPV is very common and can affect both men and women. Anyone who engages in any type of sexual contact is at risk of acquiring HPV. Because HPV is very contagious most people get HPV within the first two or three years of becoming sexually active. HPV is easily transmitted because most people typically don't have any symptoms. Approximately 80% of women who are sexually active have HPV. There are currently over 20 million women that are infected with HPV.

How Do I know if I have HPV?

A Pap test, also known as a Pap smear, is the most effective way to detect if a woman has HPV. A Pap test is a simple and painless test done at your gynecologist's office. The test takes a small sample of the cervical cells and tests for any abnormalities. It is recommended that you have this test done every year.

How Can I Prevent HPV?

The only way to completely protect yourself against HPV is abstinence (not having intercourse or engaging in sexual activity). There are other ways in which you can decrease your chances of getting HPV. One of the best ways to reduce your chances of getting HPV is to limit the number of sexual partners you have and to stay in a mutually monogamous relationship with someone who does not have HPV. Condom use is also a way to reduce your risk of getting HPV or any other STD. Condoms also protect against pregnancy. Fortunately, there is now another way in which girls and young women can protect themselves against HPV. A new vaccine called Gardasil is now available for girls and young women between the ages of 9 and 26.

What if I Already Have HPV?

If you have already been diagnosed with HPV you are still able to receive Gardasil. There are many different strains of the virus, and Gardasil can help protect you against other strains of the virus. However, Gardasil will not protect you against HPV strains to which you have already been exposed.

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Information on Gardasil

What is Gardasil?

Gardasil is a vaccine that helps protect young women against Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Gardasil can help protect women from the following strains of HPV: 6, 11, 16, and 18. These are the strains of the virus that are considered to be the most high risk strains of the virus and can lead to precancerous cells of the cervix, and genital warts.

Who Can Get Gardasil?

The Allentown Women's Center offers Gardasil to women between the ages of 9 and 26. The vaccine can be given at yearly gynecological appointments, follow-up exams, or on the same day a woman terminates a pregnancy.

What are the Possible Side Effects?

There is a risk of side effects with any vaccine, however, most girls and women have responded favorably to the Gardasil vaccine. The most common side effects from the injection included pain, swelling, itching, and redness at the injection site. Other side effects reported included fever, nausea, dizziness. If you have any unusual side effects please contact your health care provider immediately!

How is the Gardasil Vaccine Given?

The Gardasil vaccine is given in three doses. The typical schedule of doses are given as:

- First dose: at a date chosen by you and your health care provider.
- Second dose: 2 months after the first dose.
- Third dose: 6 months after the first dose.

How Much does Gardasil Cost?

The cost for the Gardasil injection is \$150 per dose. This fee includes the office visit and injection fee. All three doses will cost a total of \$450.

Do Some Insurances Cover Gardasil?

Some private medical insurances will cover the cost of the Gardasil injections. Ask your counselor or any staff member at the Allentown Women's Center if your insurance will cover the cost of the injections. AWC is able to call your insurance company to verify coverage.

Other Important Information About Gardasil

Gardasil is meant to help vaccinate and protect women from four strains of HPV (6, 11, 16 & 18). These four strains were chosen for the vaccine because they cause approximately 70% of cervical cancers and 90% of genital warts. Gardasil is NOT meant to replace routine gynecological health care and gynecological screenings like pap tests. The Allentown Women's Center recommends all women have a pap smear once a year.

Please ask your counselor or any other staff member at the Allentown Women's Center if you have any questions or concerns about the Gardasil injection.