



# Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

## (HPV) Grade 9-12 Female Catch Up Program

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect against some very serious infections. **The National Advisory Committee on Immunization** strongly recommends routine immunization. The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, Gardasil™, is being publicly funded by the Ontario Government for females in Grades 9-12. In Canada the HPV vaccine has been endorsed by the Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Care ONT, and the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada.

The vaccination is voluntary. Three separate doses, given over a specified time period are needed for complete protection. The vaccine will be administered in area schools by Registered Nurses from the Health Unit. If you are a female student in grade 9-12 and want to be protected against HPV, read the following information, and complete and sign the enclosed consent form. Then on the day of the clinic bring the consent form with you to school.

### What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a virus with more than 130 types. Some types of HPV are common sexually transmitted infections and can lead to the development of cervical cancer in women. HPV infections are very common. About 70% of women will have at least one genital HPV infection over their lifetime.

HPV types are classified as high-risk or low-risk on their association with cancer. HPV types 16 and 18 are classified as high risk and are most commonly associated with the development of cervical cancer. HPV types 6 and 11 are low risk, are not linked to cancer and most commonly associated with 90% of genital wart infections.

In Ontario each year, there are approximately 550 women diagnosed with cervical cancer and 150 deaths. In Canada, there are about 400 deaths per year from cervical cancer.

### How can someone become infected with HPV?

HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections. It is spread by skin-to-skin, genital contact with an infected person.

### What are the symptoms of HPV infection?

People with HPV infection may not know they are infected because they have no symptoms. However, even with no symptoms, people can pass the infection to their sexual partners. Depending on the HPV infection, infected individuals or their sexual partners may develop genital warts, cervical abnormalities, cervical cancer or other genital cancers.

### How is HPV infection treated?

For many, but not all, HPV types, the body's immune system can get rid of an HPV infection on its own. There are treatments available through your family physician for certain types of HPV, such as those that cause genital warts. Regular cervical screening and Pap testing are very important. Early detection of HPV infections and abnormalities of the cervix can prevent the development of cervical cancer.

### How can HPV infection be prevented?

The use of condoms during sexual activity offers some protection. The virus may be present on unprotected skin. Condoms will decrease the risk of HPV infections as well as other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). There is a vaccine now available for females that can protect against HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18. It is most effective if given before exposure to the virus. The vaccine is not a replacement for regular Pap testing.

### Is the vaccine safe?

The vaccine is safe and has been approved for use in Canada for females between 9 and 45 years old. Some people may have pain, swelling, itchiness and redness where the shot was given. Some may experience a headache, fever and nausea. Serious allergic reactions are rare but include difficulty breathing, hives and rash. See a health care provider immediately if a serious reaction occurs following vaccination.

## Who should NOT get the HPV vaccine?

You should not get the HPV vaccine if you:

- Have already been fully vaccinated with Gardasil™.
- Had a bad reaction to a previous dose of the HPV vaccine.
- Have a yeast allergy.
- Are allergic to any ingredients in the vaccine (aluminum, L-histidine, polysorbate 80, sodium borate).
- Are pregnant.

Other important things you should know about the HPV vaccine:

- A booster shot may be required later in life.
- The vaccine has been approved but not publicly funded for males in Ontario.
- Even if your child is not sexually active there is no guarantee that a future partner will not be infected with HPV and unknowingly pass it on to her.
- Once sexually active, regular Pap tests are still required to screen for cervical cancer.
- HPV is offered at no cost during school clinics to females in grades 9-12. All other females aged 9 to 45 years old can see their doctor and pay to get the vaccine. The three shots cost \$400 to \$500. Some health insurance plans may cover the cost of the vaccine.
- Participation in the HPV Vaccine Program is voluntary. HPV Vaccination is not required for school attendance under current law in Ontario (Immunization of School Pupil's Act)

## Why Grade 9-12 Girls?

Grade 9-12 was chosen because the HPV vaccine is most effective if given to females before they become sexually active. At the same time, girls in grade 9-12 are educated about sexually transmitted infections and will better understand the benefits of the vaccine.

## Record of protection

After your child receives all three doses of HPV vaccine, she will be given a vaccination record card and instructed to give it to her parent or guardian for safe keeping with her other immunization records.

Any vaccine your child receives through the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit will automatically be updated on her immunization record at the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit. Please notify the health unit every time your child receives vaccine anywhere else (i.e. doctors' office or travel clinic) so that we can update her record. You can update your child's record on line at [www.hnhu.org](http://www.hnhu.org) or by calling a member of the Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD) Team at 519-426-6170 or 905-318-6623.

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