

## **Information regarding Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine**

The following information is being provided to you at the direction of the Washington State Legislature to help reduce cervical cancer rates in Washington by protecting girls from HPV. This information is directed to girls from 6<sup>th</sup> grade through high school.

HPV is a very common virus that is spread through genital contact. At least 50% of sexually active people will get HPV at sometime in their lives. Some types of HPV can cause cervical cancer or genital warts. Both women and men can get HPV and easily spread it without knowing they have it.

The HPV vaccine is a very effective way to prevent four types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer and genital warts. Most people with HPV show no signs or symptoms. Women may find out they have HPV through cervical cancer screening (Pap Smears) and HPV testing. It is uncertain how well condoms protect against HIV infection, although condom users do have lower cervical cancer rates. However, the HPV vaccine is a very effective way to prevent four types of HPV that causes cervical cancer and genital warts.

The HPV vaccine, Gardasil, protects against four types of HPV which cause 70% of cervical cancers and 90 % of genital warts. The vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV or other sexually transmitted infections. It does not protect against any type of HPV that someone already has. The vaccine protection lasts up to 5 years. The Federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends the HPV vaccine for all girls age 11-12 years. It can also be given to females as young as nine and up to 26 years, if their doctor recommends it. HPV vaccine is given as a series of three shots over a six month period. The HPV vaccine is a preventative vaccine and will offer the best protection if given before sexual activity starts. It is not required for school entry in Washington.

Ask your doctor, nurse, or local health department for further information on this vaccine. Most providers in Washington will have state supplied HPV, and there is not cost to parents of girls under 19 years for this vaccine. There may be an office visit and/or administration fee, however.

For more information on HPV, the Vaccine, and cervical cancer:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/std/hpv](http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv)

American Cancer Society

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)