

# Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

## School Immunization Program for Grade 8 Females



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH

### What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is a common virus that can lead to genital warts and cancers of the cervix, oral cavity and genital tract. There are over 100 HPV strains.

Some HPV infections can be prevented with a vaccine. In Canada, strains 16 and 18 cause 70% of cervical cancers. Strains 6 and 11 cause 90% of genital warts.

### How is HPV spread?

HPV is most commonly spread during sexual activity by skin to skin contact with an infected person.

### What are the symptoms of HPV?

Most people never get symptoms and may not know they have been infected with HPV but they still carry the virus and can infect others. When someone gets infected, they can develop genital warts, which are usually painless but may be itchy, uncomfortable and difficult to get rid of.

### What can happen when someone gets HPV infection?

Most people in Canada will be infected with HPV at some point in their lifetime. The body's immune system usually gets rid of the virus on its own. In some people, the virus can lead to genital warts and/or cervical, oral or genital tract cancers. There are about 400 deaths in Canada each year from cervical cancer.

### How is the HPV vaccine given?

The vaccine is given as a needle in the arm. Three shots of the HPV vaccine are required for protection. The three dose series is scheduled within one year.

### How can I protect my child from getting HPV?

Get your child immunized. A vaccine named Gardasil® is now available. The vaccine can prevent infection against four strains of HPV infection – strains 6, 11, 16 and 18. It does not protect against other non-vaccine HPV types.

### Who should get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine Gardasil® is for women aged 9–45 and men aged 9–26. It is most effective when given before sexual activity begins. The provincial government is funding the HPV vaccine at no cost for all females in grade 8, through school clinics.

### Who should not get the HPV vaccine?

You should not get the HPV vaccine if you:

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

### What are the side effects from the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is safe and well tolerated.

- Some people may get pain, swelling, itchiness and redness where the shot was given
- Some may have a headache, fever, nausea
- Allergic reactions are rare but may include difficulty breathing, hives, and rash

## How good is the vaccine?

The vaccine is almost 100% effective against the four HPV strains in the vaccine. Studies have shown good protection for 10 years after immunization. There is no risk of getting an HPV infection from the vaccine since the vaccine does not contain the virus.

## Other important things you should know about the HPV vaccine:

- Once sexually active, regular Pap tests are still required to screen for cervical cancer
- The HPV vaccine protects against 4 strains of the virus
- This vaccine does not prevent other infections

## If I have a child who is not in grade 8, can she/he get the vaccine too?

The provincial government is funding the HPV vaccine at no cost for all females in grade 8, through school clinics. All other females aged 9–45 can see their doctor and pay to get the vaccine. The three shots cost \$400–500.

For males, the vaccine is not publicly funded, but it is licensed for men aged 9–26. Speak to your family doctor if you want your son vaccinated.

Some health insurance plans may cover the cost of the vaccine.

## Before giving the HPV vaccine, Region of Waterloo Public Health Nurses will ask your child some questions about:

- Your child's health on that day
- Your child's general health status
- Any allergies to vaccines or medications
- Any medications that your child is taking
- Any problems with getting vaccines in the past
- Any previous HPV vaccination

## On the day of the clinic:

- Have your child wear a short sleeve shirt to make immunization easier
- Have your child eat a good breakfast or lunch before the clinic

**If your child has already received the HPV vaccine (Gardasil®), please call the Immunization Information Line at 519-883-2007 to update your child's records.**

## Region of Waterloo Public Health

*Immunization Information Line*

519-883-2007