

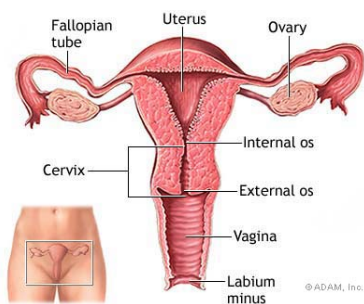
The HPV Vaccine: A Guide for San Francisco Teens

There's a vaccine available to girls that helps prevent cervical cancer caused by certain types of Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Maybe you've heard about the HPV vaccine from a friend, parent, or doctor. **So why is it such a big deal?** It is the first vaccine that helps prevent a major type of cervical cancer! **Not sure if the vaccine is right for you?** We hope this guide will answer your questions so **you** can decide.

What is HPV (Human Papillomavirus)?

There are many different types of HPV (more than 100!). Researchers keep track of the different types of HPV by identifying them with numbers (like #6, 11, 16 and 18).

Some types cause genital warts (an STD); others cause **pre-cancerous changes** (cellular changes that can lead to cancer of the cervix later). In rare cases, the virus can cause other types of cancers to the vulva, vagina, and anus in girls, and the anus and penis in guys.



Am I at risk for HPV?

Any sexually active person—no matter what color, race, gender or sexual orientation—can get HPV. 1 in every 2 sexually active young women has HPV, and about 20 million Americans know they have HPV because they have had genital warts or an abnormal Pap test. But most people don't know they have HPV because they don't have symptoms.

HPV is spread by **skin-to-skin contact** during vaginal, anal, or oral sex with **someone who is infected with HPV**. Condoms can help protect against HPV, but they aren't perfect because HPV can be found on skin that isn't covered by a condom.

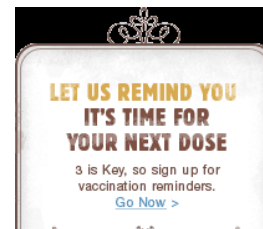


You can get the HPV vaccine at 3rd Street Clinic (415-615-9945), South East Health Center (415-671-7000), Cole Street Clinic (415-673-2319), Mission Neighborhood Clinic (415-552-3870), and City Clinic (415-487-5500)

What is the HPV vaccine?

The vaccine is called **Gardasil**. It prevents four types of HPV: #16 and 18 (linked to cervical cancer) and #6 and 11 (which cause genital warts).

The vaccine works best in girls who have **not yet come in contact with HPV**. That's why the vaccine is recommended for 11-12 year old girls as a routine vaccination. It is also recommended for women ages 13-26 who have not yet had the vaccine. The HPV vaccine is given in a series of **3 shots over 6 months**. The first shot is your choice. The second should be given two months later, and the third should be given about six months after the first one.



How does the HPV vaccine work?

The vaccine is a fluid that has very small particles in it that look like HPV. The body quickly starts making antibodies (protection) against HPV. Antibodies are necessary to fight HPV. Remember the virus isn't a live virus, which means **you can't get HPV from the vaccine**.

****It is important to plan on returning to your doctor or nurse for your second and third shots. The vaccine will not be completely effective if you don't have all three doses of the vaccine.****

When is the best time to get vaccinated?

The best time to get vaccinated is **before you come in contact with the HPV virus**. Doctors recommend that all 11 and 12 year old girls get it. Older girls can also get the vaccine; it is approved for all women ages 9-26.

Are there any side effects with the HPV vaccine?

Side effects are rare! But some girls who get the vaccine may complain of pain or redness where they got the shot (usually in their arm). In very few cases, people may get a fever, feel dizzy, or feel sick to their stomach.



Is there any reason why I *shouldn't* get the HPV vaccine?

The vaccine is not recommended if you are pregnant, have certain blood conditions, or an immune disorder. If you aren't sure, ask your doctor if it's a good idea for you to get it.

****If you find out that you're pregnant after you get the first shot, tell your doctor or nurse. You will be advised to wait to get the second or third shot until after your pregnancy is over.****

Should I get the vaccine even if I've already had sex and don't know if I was exposed to HPV?

Yes. Girls and young women should receive the vaccine even if they have already had sex. **It is not necessary to have an HPV test before getting the vaccine.**

If I've already tested positive for HPV, will the vaccine help?

It depends on what type of HPV you have been exposed to. The vaccine won't **cure** an HPV infection that you already have. It could, however, protect you from the types of HPV that you

have not come in contact with. Since there is **no test available** to tell for sure if a woman has had just one or all four types of the HPV virus, it is recommended to get the vaccine.

****Talk to your nurse or doctor to find out if you should have the vaccine. Remember, it is important to use condoms every time you have sex and to see your nurse or doctor for regular check-ups and Pap tests.****



If I get the HPV vaccine will I be protected for the rest of my life?

We don't know how long you'll be protected after you receive Gardasil because it hasn't been available for very long. So far, research studies have followed girls for 5 years after they received the HPV vaccine and they are **still protected**. The levels of antibodies are very high, so protection is likely to last for a long time.

Is there an HPV vaccine for boys too?

The HPV vaccine has only been approved for young women between 9-26 years old. Scientific research is being done to figure out if boys would benefit from the vaccine. It's possible that in the future they will also get vaccinated.

****Don't forget: the HPV vaccine protects you against some kinds of the virus, but it doesn't protect you from all of them. It is still very important to go for regular check-ups and Pap tests. Be sure that you always use condoms if you are sexually active. Talk to your nurse or doctor about whether the vaccine is right for you!****