

# Human Papillomavirus Vaccine

Vaccines have saved more lives compared to any other medical intervention. Vaccines help the immune system recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause serious diseases.

## Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) and causes many cancers.

- There are over 100 types of HPV viruses and 9 types are vaccine preventable.
- HPV types 6 and 11 cause over 90% of genital warts.
- HPV types 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58 cause mouth, nose, throat and anal cancers in males and females, cervical and vaginal cancers in females and penile cancer in males.
- The HPV vaccine does not protect against other STIs.

## How is HPV spread?

- HPV is transmitted through sexual skin-to-skin contact.
- Anyone who is sexually active can get a HPV infection.
- About 75% of sexually active females and males will have at least one HPV infection during their lifetime.

## What are the symptoms of HPV infection?

- Most people do not show any signs or symptoms and can pass HPV on to others without knowing it.
- Genital warts can look like small, flesh-colored bumps or have a cauliflower-like appearance. Genital warts do not have to be visible to spread the infection to a sexual partner.
- Usually, a HPV infection will go away on its own but for some people, the body cannot fight the HPV infection and the infected cells can develop cancer.

## How can HPV infections be prevented?

- Be immunized. **Gardasil® 9** vaccine is very effective to prevent infection against 9 common types of HPV.
- Abstinence from all sexual activity and avoiding sexual skin-to-skin contact are the only ways to avoid getting or spreading a HPV infection.
- Limit the number of sexual partners you have and always use condoms.

## Who can get this vaccine for free?

- Grade 6 students as part of the routine immunization program.
- Females born since January 1, 1996 and males born since January 1, 2006, who missed the HPV vaccine in Grade 6 can receive it for free before they are 27 years old by contacting Public Health.
- Those with specific medical conditions (check with Public Health).
- NOTE: HPV vaccines are recommended for other people but are not available for free. Individuals should talk with their healthcare provider about privately purchasing HPV vaccine. **The Ministry of Health does not reimburse any costs associated with privately purchased vaccines.**

## Who should not get this vaccine?

- Persons who have a serious acute illness, with or without a fever, should delay immunizations.
- People who had a serious or life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of any HPV vaccine, or any components of the vaccine.
- Pregnant women. Women who become or plan to become pregnant during the vaccination series should temporarily stop or postpone the series until after giving birth.

## What are common reactions to this vaccine?

**Vaccines are very safe and effective. It is much safer to get this vaccine than to get a HPV-related cancer or genital warts.**

- Temporary pain, redness and swelling at the injection site.
- Headache, fever, nausea, dizziness, tiredness or rash.
- These reactions are mild and may last 1 to 2 days.
- Only treat a fever (at least 6 to 8 hours after immunization) if you are uncomfortable and not sleeping.



It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in one million people who get the vaccine. **If this happens after you leave the clinic, get medical attention or call 911 right away.**

## Who should you report reactions to?

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your doctor, nurse practitioner or 811 as soon as possible.

## Talk to a public health nurse:

- If you have questions or concerns about your or your child's reaction to an immunization.
- If you or your child had to go to a doctor, a hospital or to a health centre with a symptom that might be related to immunization.

## What does the vaccine contain?

**GARDASIL® 9** contains HPV types 6, 11, 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58, aluminum (as Amorphous Aluminum Hydroxyphosphate Sulfate adjuvant), L-histidine, polysorbate 80, sodium borate, sodium chloride and water for injection. Thimerosal-free, preservative-free, antibiotic-free and latex-free.

## Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents/guardians discuss consent for immunization with their children. Efforts are first made to get parental/guardian consent for immunizations. However, children at least 13 years of age up to and including 17 years of age, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risks of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations in Saskatchewan by providing mature minor informed consent to a healthcare provider.

Provincial immunization fact sheets are available at [www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize).

**References:** [Canadian Immunization Guide](#). GARDASIL® 9 (2023) product monograph.

### It is very important for:

- Females to get regular Pap tests when they become sexually active or by 21 years old.
- Males to do regular testicular exams.
- Females and males to be screened for anal cancer, throat and other head and neck cancers as recommended by their health professional.

**For more information, contact your local public health office, your physician, nurse practitioner, HealthLine online or by calling 811.**