

Human Papillomavirus Vaccine

Vaccines have saved more lives in Canada in the last 60 years than any other medical intervention. Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.

9 types of the human papillomavirus are vaccine preventable.

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) and causes many cancers.
- The HPV vaccine does not protect against other STIs.
- There are over 100 types of HPV viruses and 9 types are vaccine preventable.
- The Gardasil 9™ (HPV-9) vaccine contains HPV types 6, 11, 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58. It replaces the Gardasil™ (HPV-4) vaccine previously used in Saskatchewan.
- 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.

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.
- 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. A complete Gardasil 9™ series 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.
- Delay sexual activity (wait until you are older).
- Limit the number of sexual partners you have and always use condoms.

Who can get this vaccine for free?

- Grade 6 students so that they are protected before they become sexually active.
- 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 until 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 illness, with or without a fever, should delay immunizations.
- People who had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of any HPV vaccine, or any components of the vaccine.
- Pregnant individuals.

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 soreness, redness and swelling at the injection site
- Headache, a fever, nausea 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 your child is uncomfortable, refusing fluids and not sleeping.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) may be given for fever or soreness. ASA (Aspirin) must NOT be given to anyone younger than 18 years old because of the risk of Reye syndrome.

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. **If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.** This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in one million people who get the vaccine.

Who should you report reactions to?

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

Talk to a public health nurse:

- If you have questions or concerns about you 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.

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

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.

Reference: GARDASIL®9 (2022) product monograph.

It is very important for:

- Females to get regular Pap tests once they become sexually active.
- Males to do regular testicular exams.