

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccine

HPV, or the Human Papilloma Virus, is a common virus that is transmitted sexually. While most strains can be detected and treated with regular gynecological exams, some strains are more persistent and can lead to cervical cancer. Each year in the United States, 14,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and more than 3,900 die from it.¹ Hispanic and African American women are approximately 1.5 times more likely to develop cervical cancer than white women, and are also more likely to die as a result.^{2,3}

In June 2006, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Gardasil, a vaccine that can protect women against the most virulent strains of HPV that cause 70 percent of cervical cancers. Unfortunately, this life-saving vaccine is very expensive; a series of three shots administered within a six-month period costs approximately \$360.

- The best way to eradicate cervical cancer is widespread HPV vaccination. The most successful immunization programs, such as those for small pox or polio, require vaccination.
- Given the high cost of the HPV vaccine, adding it to the list of required immunizations is critical to making the vaccine accessible through coverage by private health insurers and government vaccination programs.
- Populations that experience disproportionate rates of poverty, coverage by private by private health insurers and government vaccination programs is the key to preventing cervical cancer.

In Virginia

- Between 1998 and 2002, about 300 women in Virginia were diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer annually, for a rate of 7.9 cases per 100,000 women, slightly lower than the national rate of 8.7 per 100,000.⁴
- Prevention of cervical cancer has widespread and bi-partisan support among state legislators: Gov. Tim Kaine's proposed budget includes \$1.4 million to supply local health departments with the vaccine and in November Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling launched his *Ending Cervical Cancer in our Lifetime* initiative for public awareness about cervical cancer.

Recent Developments

In the 2007 General Assembly session, two bills were passed (HB 2035 and SB 1230) adding the HPV vaccine to the Virginia Board of Health's required immunizations for attendance at a public or private elementary, middle or secondary school, child care center, nursery school, family day care home or developmental center. As with other immunization requirements, the HPV requirement includes an opt-out option for parents who object to vaccinations for religious or other reasons. Governor Tim Kaine has announced that he intends to sign the bill into law.

For more information on this Fact Sheet or other Planned Parenthood issues go to www.ppav.org or contact ppav@ppfa.org.

¹ National Cervical Cancer Coalition (NCCC), 2007.

² CDC. United States Cancer Statistics: 2002 Incidence and Mortality, 2005.

³ Ward E, A Jemal, V Cokkinides, et al. Cancer Disparities by Race/Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status, *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*, 54(2), March/April 2004.

⁴ CDC. Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) : State Cancer Profiles, 2005.