

# HPV (Human Papillomavirus) Vaccine: What You Need to Know Cervarix®

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis).  
Hojas de Información Sobre Vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite <http://www.immunize.org/vis>

## 1. Why get vaccinated?

The vaccine you are getting (Cervarix) prevents **cervical cancer** caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.

In the U.S., about 12,000 women get cervical cancer every year, and about 4,000 women die from it. Cervarix can prevent 70% of these cancers.

HPV infection usually comes from sexual contact, and most people will become infected at some point in their life. About 14 million Americans get infected every year. Many of these infections will go away and not lead to serious problems. But thousands of women get cancer and diseases from HPV.

## 2. HPV vaccine

Cervarix is one of two HPV vaccines. It is recommended only for females. It is routinely given at 11 or 12 years of age. But it may be given through age 26 years for females who did not get it earlier.

*Vaccination is not a substitute for cervical cancer screening. Women should still get regular Pap tests.*

## 3. Some women should not get this vaccine

- Anyone who has had a severe (life-threatening) allergic reaction to a dose of HPV vaccine should not get another dose.

Anyone who has a severe (life threatening) allergy to any component of HPV vaccine should not get the vaccine. *Tell your doctor if you have any severe allergies that you know of.*

- HPV vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women. But if you find that you were pregnant when you were vaccinated it is not a reason to consider ending the pregnancy. Women who are breastfeeding may be vaccinated.
- If you have a mild illness you can probably get the vaccine today. If you are moderately or severely ill, you should probably wait until you recover. Your doctor can advise you.

#### 4. Risks of a vaccine reaction

With a vaccine, like any medicine, there is a chance of side effects. These are usually mild and go away on their own.

Serious side effects are also possible, but are very rare.

##### **Mild or moderate problems after HPV vaccine**

- Reactions in the arm where the shot was given:
  - Pain (about 9 people in 10)
  - Redness or swelling (about 1 person in 2)
- Mild fever (99.5°F) (about 1 person in 8)
- Headache or fatigue (about 1 person in 2)
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain (about 1 person in 4)
- Muscle or joint pain (up to 1 person in 2)

No serious problems have been associated with HPV vaccine.

##### **Problems that could happen after any vaccine**

- Brief fainting spells can happen after any medical procedure, including vaccination. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent fainting, and injuries caused by a fall. Tell your doctor if you feel dizzy, have vision changes or ringing in the ears.
- Severe shoulder pain and reduced range of motion in the arm where a shot was given can happen, very rarely, after a vaccination.
- Severe allergic reactions from a vaccine are very rare, estimated at less than 1 in a million doses. If one were to occur, it would be within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

#### 5. What if there is a serious reaction?

##### **What should I look for?**

- Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or behavior changes.

Signs of a **severe allergic reaction** can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These would start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

### **What should I do?**

- If you think it is a **severe allergic reaction** or other emergency that can't wait, call 9-1-1 or get to the nearest hospital. Otherwise, call your doctor.
- Afterward, the reaction should be reported to the “Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System” (VAERS). Your doctor should file this report, or you can do it yourself through the VAERS web site at [www.vaers.hhs.gov](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov), or by calling 1-800-822-7967.

*VAERS does not give medical advice.*

### **6. The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program**

The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP) is a federal program that was created to compensate people who may have been injured by certain vaccines.

Persons who believe they may have been injured by a vaccine can learn about the program and about filing a claim by calling 1-800-338-2382 or visiting the VICP website at [www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation](http://www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation). There is a time limit to file a claim for compensation.

### **7. How can I learn more?**

- Ask your doctor.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
  - Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)** or
  - Visit CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/hpv](http://www.cdc.gov/hpv)