

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) 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.

Many cancers can be prevented by getting immunized with HPV vaccine.

- There are over 200 HPV viruses.
- About 75% of Canadians will have an HPV infection in their lifetime.
- **9 HPV types are vaccine-preventable with immunization with the GARDASIL®9 vaccine.**
- HPV is responsible for almost 3,800 new cancers in Canadians every year.
- **High-risk HPV types 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58 can cause cancers of the mouth, throat, anus, cervix, vagina, vulva and penis.**
- HPV is the leading cause of head, mouth and throat cancers in Canadian men.
- Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among Canadian women aged 15 to 44 years.
 - In 2023, about 1,550 new cases were diagnosed and 400 women died from cervical cancer in Canada.
 - Canada has a goal to [eliminate cervical cancer by 2040](#).
- **HPV types 6 and 11 cause over 90% of genital warts.**

How is HPV spread?

- HPV is spread through skin-to-skin contact (including sexual activity) and to an infant during childbirth.

What signs and symptoms of HPV infection?

- During an infection, an individual can pass HPV on to others.
- Genital warts are small, flesh-colored bumps or growths on the genitals and anus.
- Most people do not have symptoms when an HPV-caused cancer is in the early stages.

How can HPV be prevented?

- **Getting immunized before being exposed to HPV is the best protection.**
- HPV vaccine is safe, effective and recommended to prevent cancer and genital warts.
- Avoiding skin-to-skin contact is the only way to avoid getting or spreading an HPV infection.
- Limit the number of sexual partners you have and always use condoms to decrease your risk of exposure to HPV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Who can get HPV vaccine for free?

- Grade 6 students.
- Adolescents and adults through age 26 years old (**you must get the first dose before your 27th birthday**).
- Select immune compromised individuals who are 9 to 26 years old.
- Adults 27 years and older may benefit from getting the HPV vaccine but it is not available for free. Talk to your 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 the HPV vaccine?

- Persons who have a serious acute illness, with or without a fever, should delay immunizations.
- People who had an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose or component of HPV vaccine.

It is very important for:

- Females to be screened for cervical cancer with a Pap or HPV test every 3 years after becoming sexually active or by age 25 years, whichever is later.
- All individuals to be screened for anal, oral, throat & other head and neck cancers as recommended by their healthcare provider.

What are common reactions to the HPV vaccine?

- 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.

Use **Acetaminophen** (Tylenol®, Tempra®) or **Ibuprofen** (Advil®, Motrin®) to treat fevers and pain in children and adults. **Never give ASA** (Aspirin®) to anyone younger than 18 years old because of the serious risk of Reye's 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. 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 HPV vaccine contain?

GARDASIL® 9 contains proteins of 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 can 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.

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

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