

HPV VACCINATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *What is cervical cancer?*

Cervical cancer occurs in the cervix (lower part of the uterus). A large majority of cervical cancer (more than 95%) is due to HPV. It is the second most common cause of cancer mortality among Indian women, therefore early protection is necessary.

2. *What is Human Papillomavirus?*

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common family of viruses. They can be transmitted by sexual contact and also surface contact. There are more than 200 types of HPV viruses. Some cause infection of the skin and others infect mucous membranes of various areas of the body. Different types of HPV infection affect the body in different ways. For instance, some types of HPV can lead to cancer of the tongue, tonsils, anus, cervix, vulva, and penis, and others cause warts in the genital area.

3. *How does HPV infection spread?*

Most HPV infections (70 - 90%) are asymptomatic and resolve spontaneously within 1–2 years, with good immunity. But when HPV infection persists, it can cause health problems including cervical cancer, which may occur many years after the initial infection. One can get HPV by having sexual contact with someone who has the virus. It also spreads through close skin-to-skin touching. A person with HPV can pass the infection to someone even when they have no signs or symptoms.

4. *Who should get the HPV vaccine?*

HPV vaccination can be initiated at the age of 9 years by females and males, until 45 years of age.

5. *What are the preventive measures against HPV infection?*

World Health Organization and Indian Government has recommended the HPV vaccine for girls to be vaccinated between the age of 9-14 years. The HPV vaccine is safe and effective and 70% of

cervical cancer in India are caused by HPV type 16 & 18. Major risk factors for persistent HPV cervical cancer include early sexual intercourse, multiple sexual partners, multiparity and poor menstrual hygiene. HIV positive patients are more likely to get cervical cancer because of lessened clearance of the vaccine from the body due to lowered immunity. Routine cervical cancer screening is also necessary from age of 30 -65 years to prevent cervical cancer.

6. *Is there a treatment for HPV?*

There is currently no treatment for the HPV itself. However, treatments are available for cancers that HPV can cause. It's important to note that the HPV vaccine is a preventive measure - it does not treat existing HPV infections or HPV-related cancers.

7. *Is it safe to get vaccinated during periods?*

Yes, you can be given HPV vaccine during menstruation. The vaccination doesn't affect menstruation and nor does menstruation cause any additional side effects of the vaccination. However, it is necessary that families are advised to make sure their daughter is well and comfortable during menstruation, if to be vaccinated.

8. *What are the side effects of the vaccine?*

Common side effects of HPV vaccination are mild, self-limiting and resolve on their own within 2-3 days. Some examples of minor side effects are pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, fever, malaise, weakness, headache and nausea.

9. *Can HPV vaccination cause infertility?*

Various medical studies found no associations between HPV and infertility. Millions of adolescent girls across the globe have been vaccinated against HPV since 2006 and, many are mothers today.