

• **HPV vaccine:** The HPV vaccine is effective for preventing four specific types of HPV that cause 90 per cent of genital warts and 70 per cent of cervical cancers, and other a lower proportion of the other HPV-related cancers mentioned earlier.

• **Regular Pap testing:** A Pap test is the only way to detect abnormal cells in the cervix that could lead to cervical cancer later in life. Health Canada recommends young women get a Pap test within three years of becoming sexually active, and repeat testing every two years.

• **Quit smoking:** Smoking reduces the body's ability to fight HPV infection, and is a factor in the development of various cancers.

• **Condoms and dental dams:** When used properly and every time, condoms and dental dams can reduce the risk of contracting many STIs. This includes use during any sexual activity, even without penetration, such as touching, rubbing, or kissing or using your mouth on your partner's vulva, vagina, penis, scrotum, and anus. Condoms and dentals dams do not provide full protection from HPV, as you can still get infected by skin that is not covered.

HPV Vaccine

The HPV vaccine was approved for use in Canada in July 2006. Current clinical scientific evidence suggests that the HPV vaccine is safe with very few side effects. The Canadian National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends HPV vaccination for all Canadian girls and young women aged 9 to 26.

Important facts to remember:

- The HPV vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV.
- The HPV vaccine is not a cure, and cannot treat people already infected with HPV.
- The HPV vaccine is not a substitute for cervical cancer screening. Even if vaccinated, women should receive regular Pap tests to reduce the risk of cervical cancer.

For more information on cervical cancer, see NAHO's fact sheet entitled *Cervical Cancer and Screening*.

How can I get the HPV vaccine?

Health coverage for medications and vaccines varies in each province and territory. For more information, check with your provincial/territorial public health department or your local health centre.



1 The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. (2009). *HPVinfo.ca*. Retrieved April 11, 2009 from <http://www.hpvinfos.ca>.

2 Audrey Steenbeek, "Empowering Health Promotion: A holistic Approach in Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections Among First Nations and Inuit Adolescents in Canada", 22 (3) *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 2004, p. 255.



National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO)
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