

What Parent's Need to Know About the HPV Vaccine

By: Bright Tomorrows Staff, www.brightcac.org

Over the past several years there has been a lot of confusion and questions about the HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine and the virus itself. Who does the virus effect? How is it spread? Is it only girls who need to be vaccinated? Is the vaccine effective? Is it dangerous?

It is important to have correct and accurate information as a parent to make the best choices for your child.

According to the Center for Disease Control, HPV is a widespread virus that, in the United States, will infect an estimated 75% to 80% of males and females in their lifetime. HPV is one of the most commonly spread sexually transmitted diseases.

For most people infected, HPV clears on its own. But, for others who don't clear HPV it could cause significant consequences such as: cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers in females. It can also cause genital warts and rarely warts in the throat in both males and females.

When it comes to HPV, girls are only half the equation. HPV can affect both males and females. Exposure can happen with any kind of adolescent experimentation (or sexual abuse) that involves genital contact with someone who has HPV—intercourse isn't necessary.

HPV often has no signs or symptoms, so it can be hard to detect. That means HPV transmission can happen without someone even knowing they have it. There is no one test that will confirm if a person has HPV. The HPV tests on the market are only used to help screen women at certain ages and with certain Pap test findings, for cervical cancer.

At Bright Tomorrows we are only too aware of sexual contact and abuse that occurs to children even under the ages recommended for the vaccination (males: ages 9 to 26, and females: ages 11 to 26). It is important to be informed to make the best decision for your child regarding this vaccination. For more information about HPV visit <http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm>.