



GARDASIL
Quadrivalent HPV vaccine.

Introduction.

Gardasil is a giant step forward in trying to prevent the onset of a common and devastating set of illnesses in women. It is the first vaccine designed and proven to prevent a major cancer.

It works by stimulating the body to produce immunity against 4 types of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

HPV is a virus of which there are over 100 types, spread by genital or sexual contact. The infection affects the genital areas and can often go unnoticed and sometimes causes no harm. The virus can however, cause changes in cells (dysplasia) and result in:

- Genital Warts
- Cervical Cancer
- High-grade cervical dysplasia
- High-grade vulvar dysplastic lesions

HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18 are the causes of 70%to 90% of cervical cancers and genital warts.

How it works.

Gardasil contains HPV proteins produced by recombinant DNA technology. It causes the production of antibodies directed at the above 4 types of HPV. It is not infectious: does not cause the actual HPV disease in recipients or their contacts. It has been shown, in a large population based study, to prevent infection from these 4 virus types and thereby protect from the complications of warts and cervical cancer. The evidence has been impressive enough for the vaccine to be fully licensed and approved in the USA and UK.

It does not however, treat already established disease or infection either directly or indirectly.

Who benefits most.

Gardasil is licensed for girls and women from 9 to 26 years of age. Its safety and efficacy in this age group is excellent and we recommend it. The earlier that immunisation is achieved, the better: ideally before becoming sexually active and risking HPV infection. Hence, seriously consider vaccinating your daughter(s).

Women who are already sexually active will also benefit as they may not have caught all 4 types of HPV as yet.

The vaccine is not yet licensed for males.

Risks.

Listed below are reasons to avoid or postpone the vaccination. Please call us if you have any doubts as the list is not exhaustive.

- Allergy or hypersensitivity to any of the active ingredients could cause an allergic reaction.
- The presence of an acute severe feverish illness poses risks of overwhelming the immune system (a mild cold or cough does not matter).
- Avoid if pregnant or likely to be pregnant (Gardasil can be given to breastfeeding women)
- Also avoid or seek advice if taking any regular medications, have HIV or other illnesses that could affect your immune system.
- Seek advice if you have a bleeding disorder.

Side effects.

About 10% of recipients can get a fever (high temperature) or redness, pain or swelling at the injection site.

1% recipients may get itching or bleeding at the site.

Rarer complications include bronchospasm (like an asthma attack), urticaria and arthritis.

Vaccination Course.

Gardasil needs to be injected into the muscle 3 times at the following intervals

- The first dose
- Second dose 2 months later
- Third dose 6 months after the first dose

Further booster doses may be required 5 to 10 years later. Research is still on-going in this regard.

Shorter intervals are possible: please ask.

Important note:

The vaccine does not replace regular cervical screening and practical measures to prevent infection such as condoms etc., when possible.

January 2007 Dr DD Ratnasinghe