

—(women's health)

# The New HPV Vaccine

## is it right for you?

by Dr. Minoos Hosseinzadeh

Why is it important to know about a sexually transmitted disease (STD) if it doesn't present any symptoms? The answer is simple: many STDs are directly correlated with increased risk for other life-threatening conditions, such as cervical cancer. Human Papillomavirus, commonly referred to as HPV, is a family of viruses that is often unaccompanied by noticeable symptoms; meaning, the infection can go undetected. In some cases, it can cause skin infections in various parts of the body. In others, the infection produces genital warts, itching or pain. With more than 100 types of HPV viruses out there, HPV represents the most common cause of an abnormal Pap test (a screening test for cervical cancer), and is also the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States – affecting approximately 20 million people.

**By age 50, at least 80 percent of women will have acquired genital HPV infection.**

For many years, a relationship between HPV infection and both cervical cancer and genital warts has been well known. In fact, approximately 70 percent of various cervical cancers result from HPV infection, as well as 90 percent of cases of genital warts. Cervical cancer is second only to breast cancer as the leading type of cancer in women. It is also the

second largest cause of female cancer mortality worldwide, so it makes sense to practice HPV prevention and seek out early detection.

### **New Hope for HPV Prevention**

Recently, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved a quadrivalent HPV vaccine for females aged 9-26 years. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends the vaccination of females in this age group, and has recommended that the first adolescent reproductive health care visit take place between ages 13 and 15 so as to discuss the benefits of the vaccine and to offer it. Additionally, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended that the vaccination routinely be given to girls when they are 11 or 12 years old, as it is most effective when given to girls and women before they become sexually active. Important points to consider include:

- \*The vaccine is given in three separate doses over a six-month period of time.
- \*It only offers protection against cervical cancer, cervical dysplasia and genital warts associated with HPV genotypes 6, 11, 16 and 18.

\*The HPV vaccination is not a substitute for the Pap test, which is used for cancer screening.

As there is no cure for HPV, prevention is key. Apart from vaccination, there are a few steps one can take to reduce the risk of contracting HPV. Young women who have recently become sexually active are particularly prone to infection and every sexual encounter with a new partner offers the possibility of acquiring HPV. Therefore, limiting the number of sexual partners and using condoms can reduce the likelihood of contracting HPV. And, regular Pap screenings go a long way toward detecting existing infection as early as possible. The first Pap should be given approximately three years after having vaginal sexual intercourse, but no later than age 21. Women up to age 30 should have an annual Pap, and women who are 30 years or older and who have had three or more consecutive, normal Pap tests may be screened every two to three years.

Dr. Minoos Hosseinzadeh is a nationally recognized specialist in reproductive endocrinology at the largest and most-established locally-based fertility center in Orange County, Calif., Coastal Fertility Medical Center. Double-board certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology and Reproductive Endocrinology & Infertility, she is also a member of the American Society of Reproductive Medicine, Society for Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. She has presented at several national and international fertility meetings and authored numerous papers on hormone replacement therapy and age-related female infertility.

Email questions to Women's Health with Dr. Minoos at [DrMinoos@OCPCmagazine.com](mailto:DrMinoos@OCPCmagazine.com)



**Minoos Hosseinzadeh, MD**

Coastal Fertility Medical Center  
4900 Barranca Pkwy., Ste. 103  
Irvine, CA 92604

**(949)726-0600**

[www.CoastalFertility.com](http://www.CoastalFertility.com)