

## **HPV (Human Papillomavirus) Vaccine Cervarix<sup>®</sup>: What you need to know**

### **1. What is HPV?**

**Genital human papillomavirus (HPV)** is the most common sexually transmitted virus. More than half of sexually active men and women are infected with HPV at some time in their lives.

Most HPV infections don't cause any symptoms, and go away on their own. But HPV can cause **cervical cancer** in women. Cervical cancer is the 2nd leading cause of cancer deaths among women around the world.

HPV is also associated with several less common cancers, such as vaginal and vulvar cancers in women and other types of cancer in both men and women. It can also cause genital warts and warts in the throat.

There is no cure for HPV infection, but some of the problems it causes can be treated.

### **2. HPV vaccine: Why get vaccinated?**

HPV vaccine is important because **it can prevent most cases of cervical cancer** in females, if it is given before a person is exposed to the virus.

Protection from HPV vaccine is expected to be long- lasting. But vaccination is not a substitute for cervical cancer screening. Women should still get regular Pap tests.

The vaccine you are getting is one of **two HPV vaccines that can be given to prevent cervical cancer. It is given to females only.**

The other vaccine may be given to both males and females. It can also prevent most genital warts. It has also been shown to prevent some vaginal, vulvar and anal cancers.

### **3. Who should get this HPV vaccine and when?**

#### **Routine vaccination**

- HPV vaccine is recommended for girls **11 or 12 years of age**. It may be given to girls starting at age 9.

#### **Why is HPV vaccine given to girls at this age?**

It is important for girls to get HPV vaccine **before** their first sexual contact—because they won't have been exposed to human papillomavirus.

Once a girl or woman has been infected with the virus, the vaccine might not work as well or might not work at all.

### **Catch-up vaccination**

- The vaccine is also recommended for girls and women **13 through 26 years of age** who did not get all 3 doses when they were younger.

### **HPV vaccine is given as a 3-dose series**

1st Dose:	Now
2nd Dose:	1 to 2 months after Dose 1
3rd Dose:	6 months after Dose 1

Additional (booster) doses are not recommended.

HPV vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

### **4. Some people should not get HPV vaccine or should wait**

- Anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to any component of HPV vaccine, or to a previous dose of HPV vaccine, should not get the vaccine.
- HPV vaccine is not recommended for **pregnant women**. However, receiving HPV vaccine when pregnant is not a reason to consider terminating the pregnancy. Women who are breast feeding may get the vaccine.

People who are mildly ill when a dose of HPV vaccine is planned can still be vaccinated. People with a **moderate or severe illness** should wait until they are better.

### **5. What are the risks from this vaccine?**

This HPV vaccine has been in use around the world for several years and has been very safe.

Life-threatening allergic reactions from vaccines are very rare. If they do occur, it would be within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

Several **mild to moderate problems** are known to occur with HPV vaccine. These do not last long and go away on their own.

- Reactions where the shot was given:
  - Pain
  - Redness or swelling
- Other mild reactions:
  - Fever of 99.5°F or higher
  - Headache or fatigue
  - Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain

- Muscle or joint pain
- Fainting:

Brief fainting spells and related symptoms (such as jerking movements) can happen after any medical procedure, including vaccination. **Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes after a vaccination can help prevent fainting and injuries caused by falls.**

## **6. What if there is a serious reaction?**

### **What should I look for?**

- Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or behavior changes.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These would start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.