



Gardasil

The new vaccine against Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

Gardasil will be available at Northside Clinic from 1st July 2007. It is an important medical advance as it is the first vaccine able to protect against a major cause of cancer in women.

We have a team of dedicated healthcare professionals who will be able to offer you detailed information and advice. The vaccine will normally be given by one of our primary care specialists.

What Is HPV?

HPV is a common virus that is passed on via genital contact. There are more than 100 HPV types and they infect genital areas. Sometimes they cause no harm and any infection goes away on its own. However, sometimes the virus persists and causes cells to change - this can lead to:

- cervical cancer
- pre cancerous lesions
- genital warts.

What Does Gardasil Do?

Gardasil is a vaccine that protects against HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18. These four types of HPV cause 70% of cervical cancers and 90% of genital warts.

Gardasil will NOT protect against diseases that are not caused by HPV (i.e. other cancers and other sexually transmitted diseases).

Gardasil may NOT protect against HPV types to which you have already been exposed. Unfortunately there is no test available, as yet, to check which type you have or haven't got.

Gardasil does not replace a smear test. You should still have regular cervical smears as offered by the Department of Health.

Who Should Get Vaccinated?

The vaccine is licensed for girls and women from 9 to 26 years of age. The vaccine is safe and effective in this age group. Ideally, females should get the vaccine before they become sexually active, that is before they can be exposed to HPV.

Females who are sexually active can also benefit as they might not yet have acquired all four HPV types - so they may get some protection from the vaccine. Most people are not infected with all four HPV types.

Who Should Not Receive Gardasil?

- People allergic to vaccine ingredients (see: www.gardasil.com)
- Pregnant women
- People with a weakened immune system
(such as those with HIV or undergoing cancer treatment)
- People with a bleeding disorder
- People taking certain medicines
- Males (not yet licensed for use)

Possible side effects:

The vaccine is usually well tolerated.

The most likely side effects include - pain, itching, swelling at the injection site, fever, nausea, and dizziness.

How Is Gardasil Given?

Gardasil requires a total of 3 injections into the upper arm, at the following minimum intervals:

- Initial dose at a date you choose with your doctor
- Second dose: 2 months later
- Third dose: 4 months after the second dose

Other Important Points:

The length of vaccine protection is not known yet. To date, research shows that it protects for at least 5 years. It is possible that a booster may be needed at some point in the future, to maintain protection.

Girls and women who have been vaccinated will still need regular cervical cancer screening - this is because the vaccine does not protect against ALL types of HPV.

Are There Any Other Ways To Prevent HPV?

The only sure way to prevent HPV is to abstain from sexual activity.

Sexually active adults can reduce their risk by limiting their number of sexual partners and using condoms. Even people with only one partner can get HPV if their partner has been exposed to a previous partner with HPV.