

GYNAECOLOGY & OBSTETRICS UPDATE

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2012**

HPV Vaccination: Can It Prevent Cervical Cancer?

One question that has persisted is how effective the HPV vaccination is in preventing the most serious complications associated with infection with HPV 16 and 18, specifically cervix cancer and the precursor lesions, cervical intraepithelial neoplasia grade 3 (CIN3) and adenocarcinoma in situ. In a study that appeared in the *Lancet Oncology* [*Lancet Oncol.* 2011 Nov], the results were nothing but **spectacular**. In a population of more than 11,000 young women who participated in this landmark trial, specifically women who were naive to HPV-16 or -18 infection at the time of vaccination, the vaccination strategy was essentially **100% effective** in that there were no cases of CIN3 or adenocarcinoma in situ compared with 20 cases of CIN3 and 6 cases of adenocarcinoma in situ in the control population. These results emphasize the extreme importance of HPV vaccination in all young women. They demonstrate that this vaccine, in future years, will clearly be shown to have a major impact on public health in general and on the health of the individual women who have undergone vaccination. Additionally, this study emphasizes that all clinicians should do their best to make sure that the population understands the benefits of HPV vaccination.

Some Girls Overestimate HPV Vaccine Protection

Some adolescent girls who get the HPV vaccine to prevent cervical cancer wrongly think they no longer need to practice safe sex (or need cervical screening). A study, published in the January issue of *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine* [*Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2012;166:82-88], shows the need for better education about the vaccines and their limitations. **23.6%** of girls believed they were less at risk for getting sexually transmitted diseases after getting the vaccine. Factors associated with this view included having less information about the vaccine and about HPV infections, less concern about contracting HPV and lack of condom use at last sexual intercourse with a male partner. Discussing HPV vaccination with girls and their mothers should emphasize the limitations of the vaccine and to specifically address that the vaccine does not prevent other sexually transmitted infections and also does not prevent cancer cervix due to other types of HPV and cervical screening should therefore continue.