

FACTS ON HPV

What you need
to know about this
cancer causing
disease and the
vaccines that can
prevent it.

How are HPV and cervical cancer connected?

- Chronic infection of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the leading cause of cervical cancer – in fact, two strains (16 and 18) cause [70%](#) of cervical cancer.¹
- Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer killer among women worldwide, killing almost 300,000 women every year. [Half a million](#) new cases occur each year around the globe.²
- Cervical cancer strikes close to [14,000](#) American women each year³ and causes almost [4,000](#) deaths annually in the U.S.⁴

How is HPV transmitted?

- Genital HPV is most often transmitted through sexual contact, although it can also be transmitted by any intimate skin-to-skin contact.
- People can be carriers of genital HPV without even realizing it because in most cases there are no symptoms. In over [90 percent](#) of cases, HPV infections are harmless and disappear without treatment.⁵

Who has HPV?

- At least 20 million people in the U.S. are currently infected with genital HPV, and around [half](#) of all sexually active women between 18 and 22 will become infected.⁶
- Over [630 million people](#) are infected with HPV worldwide.⁷

Who is most affected by cervical cancer?

- All women are at risk for cervical cancer, but certain groups are affected disproportionately.
- [Not even half](#) of women of color have received recent screenings for cervical cancer.⁸
- Latinas have [double](#) the rate of incidence of cervical cancer as non-Latina whites.⁹
- Vietnamese American women have the [highest rate](#) of cervical cancer for any racial or ethnic group in the country.¹⁰
- The African American mortality rate continues to be more than [double](#) that of whites and Latinas.¹¹
- Women in the global south rarely have access to Pap smears, the primary screening tool used to diagnose cervical cancer. As a result, they account for [85% of the deaths from cervical cancer](#).¹²

What about the recently announced vaccines?

- Merck and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) have developed two new anti-cancer vaccines that prevent persistent infections with the HPV strains that lead to cervical cancer.
- The two new vaccines are highly effective – virtually [100 percent](#) in recent trials – in protecting women from persistent infection of HPV strains 16 and 18, the major causes of cervical cancer.¹³
- The vaccines produce the strongest immune responses in [girls ages 10-15](#).¹⁴
- The Merck vaccine has already been submitted to the FDA for approval and the GSK vaccine will be submitted for approval in Europe and elsewhere later this year.
- It is estimated that the vaccines could cost [\\$200](#) or more per three-shot series -- a significant cost and logistical challenge for many families.¹⁵

Endnotes

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³ *National Cervical Cancer Coalition*, What is the National Cervical Cancer Coalition?, 1997-2006, <http://www.nccc-online.org/>.

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⁶ *NewScientist.com News Service*, April 18, 2005, Debora MacKenzie, Will Cancer Vaccine Get to All Women?, *NewScientist.com*, <http://www.newscientist.com/channel/sex/mg18624954.500>.

⁷ Vaccine Will Help Protect Women Against Cervical Cancer, *MedicineWorld.org*, <http://medicineworld.org/cancer/lead/11-2005/vaccine-will-help-protect-women-against-cervical-cancer.html>.

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¹² Alliance for Cervical Cancer Prevention, The Case for Investing in Cervical Cancer Prevention, *Cervical Cancer Prevention Issues in Depth*, No. 3, November, 2004.

¹³ *Women's Health/OBGYN News*, April 11, 2005, Merck HPV Vaccine Effective in Preventing Infection With Four Strains Linked to Genital Warts, Cervical Cancer, Study Says, *Medical News Today*, <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=22620>.

¹⁴ *Daily Women's Health Policy Report*, May 20, 2005, Merck's HPV Vaccine Produces Stronger Immune Response in Girls, Boys Ages 10-15 Than Women Ages 16-23, Study Says, *The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation*, http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?hint=2&DR_ID=30214.

¹⁵ *The RPM Report: Regulation, Policy, Market Access*, December 2005, Vol. 1, No. 1, Kate Rawson, The HPV Race: Merck Breaks Ground; GSK Tries to Make Up Ground, <http://www.pacificresearch.org/press/opd/2005/RPMDec05.pdf>

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