Update on Gardasil vaccine: yes, it is safe and effective

"Should I give my kid the Gardasil® vaccine?" Friends and relatives, as well as our patients' parents, continue to ask us this question.

Our answer is always: "Yes."

Gardasil® vaccine is the current HPV vaccine on the United States market. The vaccine prevents cancer-causing strains of human papillomavirus from infecting a person's body. HPV cancers include cervical cancer in women, penile cancers in men, and cancers of the mouth and throat in everyone. The vaccine also protects against genital warts.

According to the Centers for Disease Control report, nearly 90 million HPV vaccines were distributed from June 2006 through March 2016. That's a lot of vaccinations. In the US,

the large majority of HPV vaccine given was the Gardasil® vaccine.

You can read a detailed report of the way the safety of the vaccine was studied here.

Here are the updates:

1. **The vaccine prevents cancer-causing strains of HPV from infecting teens and young adults. You can read the latest study about this here.**
2. **The vaccine is still safe.** The HPV vaccine has still NOT caused any deaths, has NOT caused cases of premature ovarian failure, and has NOT caused any new chronic pain syndromes or neurologic diseases. If you read on the internet or on Facebook any gory tales about Gardasil, you can check those stories on "Snopes." This website determines whether a popular internet story is a myth or a fact.
3. **Your child may need only two doses of HPV vaccine instead of three. We now know that younger teens achieve immunity with fewer doses than older teens. So, if your child gets the FIRST dose of this vaccine prior to his 15th birthday, then he needs only one more dose of vaccine 6 months later. Those starting the Gardasil® vaccine on or after their 15th birthday still need 3 doses of vaccine for maximum protection against the disease.**
4. **If your child has a weak immune system, they also might need three doses. Children with weakened immune systems (check with your child's pediatrician) should get 3 doses of Gardasil®.**
5. **Teens and tweens are more likely to feel dizzy or to faint after all vaccinations, not only after the HPV vaccine**. There are reports that HPV vaccine causes kids to faint, but fainting may occur with any teen vaccine. It is well known that surges of anxiety can cause fainting. Although they are older, teens are often very

apprehensive about getting vaccines. Babies and toddlers rarely faint. Although a toddler may be mad about a vaccine injection, they are not anxious. To prevent any light headedness, your teen’s doctor may have them sit for a few minutes after a vaccine.

There’s a reason why we give the vaccine “so young.” Once people are infected, the vaccine does not work as well. Even though it may be difficult to imagine your child needing protection from a sexually transmitted disease, prevention of cancer-causing strains of human papillomavirus is most effective when HPV immunization is given well before your kids have had any exposure to the virus.

Yes, the HPV vaccine is safe, and yes, we gave it to our own kids.

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