HPV Vaccine Cuts Cervical Cancer Risk

The Gardasil 9 vaccine protects against nine types of HPV.

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A study from the United Kingdom provides further real-world evidence that human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines dramatically lower the risk of cervical cancer. One of the most common sexually transmitted infections, HPV triggers abnormal cell growth that can lead to precancerous cell changes and, if left untreated, cancer of the cervix, anus, vulva, vagina, penis, mouth and throat. The Gardasil 9 vaccine protects against nine types of HPV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends vaccination for girls and boys at ages 11 or 12.

As reported in The Lancet, Peter Sasieni, PhD, of King's College London, and colleagues analyzed data on all cervical cancer cases diagnosed among women in England between January 2006 and June 2019. HPV vaccination reduced cervical cancer incidence by 34% for young women who received the shots at ages 16 to 18, by 62% for those who were vaccinated at ages 14 to 16 and by 87% for those who were vaccinated at ages 12 or 13. The team estimated that the U.K. vaccination program prevented 17,235 cases of advanced precancerous cell changes and 448 cases of cervical cancer over 11 years.

"We've known for many years that HPV vaccination is very effective in preventing particular strains of the virus, but to see the real-life impact of the vaccine has been truly rewarding," Sasieni says. "Assuming most people continue to get the HPV vaccine and go for screening, cervical cancer will become a rare disease."

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