

August 2, 2007

HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM

The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is a common sexually transmitted virus and causes cervical cancer. About 70 per cent of adults will have had at least one genital HPV infection over their lifetime. In addition to cancer, HPV can cause genital warts.

Every year, about 500 women in Ontario are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 140 will die from the disease. Across Canada, about 1,400 females are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and about 400 will die from the disease.

HPV Vaccination Program

Beginning this fall, the three-dose HPV vaccine will be offered to about 84,000 young women in Grade eight. This school-based vaccination program will be administered by public health nurses. The vaccination will be voluntary. This initiative represents an investment of \$117 million over three years. The funding for today's announcement is being provided through a recent federal budget initiative.

Educational materials on HPV, cervical cancer and the vaccination program will be developed and provided to young women and their families, along with consent forms in advance of the scheduled vaccination clinic. Consent to receive the vaccination will be addressed in the same manner as other voluntary school-based vaccine programs.

HPV Vaccine

In July 2006, Health Canada approved a new HPV vaccine which provides protection against four types of HPV, two of which are responsible for about 70 per cent of cervical cancers. The vaccine is most effective when given to females before they become sexually active and are exposed to HPV infection. This vaccine is currently licensed for use in females aged 9 to 26 years.

The HPV vaccine is close to 100 per cent effective in preventing four types of HPV infection (types 6, 11, 16 and 18). HPV types 6 and 11 are low risk, not linked to cancer, and responsible for 90 per cent of genital warts. HPV types 16 and 18 are considered high risk and responsible for 70 per cent of cervical cancers.

The burden of disease in Canada attributable to HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18 is substantial. The diagnoses and treatment of HPV is estimated to cost more than \$300 million to the Canadian health care system annually.

Although the vaccine provides protection against HPV, it is not a replacement for cervical cancer screening. Regular cervical cancer screening, combined with the vaccine, provide the best protection against cervical cancer.

Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have announced that they will be implementing HPV vaccination programs into their provincial school-based immunization programs in fall 2007.

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