

## **HPV and Me: What you need to know!**

*HPV stands for human papillomavirus and it is a common STD. It can cause genital or oral warts (gross!) or even worse, cancer (yikes!). Luckily for you there is a vaccine available to prevent several strains of the HPV virus that lead to the most problems. Here's the breakdown of what you need to know about the HPV shots!*

### **Do both guys and girls need to get these shots?**

Yes, both genders should get the vaccine because both can get the genital or oral warts associated with HPV and both can get the associated cancers. It is important for everyone to get the HPV vaccines to prevent spreading the virus to current and future partners. This includes LGBT individuals too because any kind of sexual activity has the potential to transmit HPV!

### **You said shots not shot, how many shots do I have to get?**

The vaccine series consists of three shots. The second one you get one to two months after the first and the third one you get six months after the first. You should be able to finish the series in under a year.

### **When should I start getting these shots?**

This vaccine came out in 2006 and is recommended as part of your regular vaccine schedule to get around age 11-12. This is good news for some of you because you might have already gotten the vaccine and you just didn't know what it was for! Check your shot records or call your doctor and ask if you got the vaccine. If you didn't get it yet, don't worry it's not too late! It is recommended that you get the vaccines before you become sexually active, but better late than never! So easy answer, if you haven't got the vaccines yet you should get them NOW!

### **Where can I get the HPV shot?**

You have lots of choices! You can go to your regular doctor, a clinic, and even your local pharmacy!

### **Are there any side effect from these shots that I should worry about?**

Well a shot is a shot is a shot. What I mean is, shots tend to hurt and most people will feel tender and might have a little redness and swelling where it was given. These are just temporary and not a reason to avoid getting vaccinated.

### **Do I have to get my parents' permission to get the HPV shots?**

Nope, since it relates to preventing a sexually transmitted disease, it is a confidential service that you can receive without telling them. Your doctor or pharmacist is legally not allowed to disclose information about this to them without your permission.

HOWEVER, if you are under your parents insurance, the insurance company might send your parents documents about what you got done at the doctor or pharmacy. To be safe, consider filling out a "confidential communication request" for your insurance company. See [www.myhealthmyinfo.org](http://www.myhealthmyinfo.org) for more information and the form!

Of course we always encourage teens to be open and honest with their parents as much as possible, I mean obviously they are sexual beings too since once upon a time they had you! This HPV shot is the only shot on the market that prevents cancer so it is really important for you and your parents to get all the facts. If they are interested in learning more you can send them to the page on the CDC website that is made just for parents of teens! <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/who/teens/vaccines/hpv.html>