



## **Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccine**

**December 2009**

### **What is HPV vaccine?**

- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is a vaccine that stimulates the body's immunity to HPV infection. Human papilloma viruses are the major cause of cervical cancer.

### **GARDASIL® vaccine**

- The cervical cancer vaccine currently used in the Western Australian (WA) school based program is called GARDASIL®. This vaccine prevents infection with HPV types 16, 18, 6 and 11. HPV 16 and 18 are responsible for the majority (70% internationally; 80% in Australia) of cervical cancers. HPV 6 and 11 are responsible for 90% of genital warts.

### **Who is at risk of getting HPV?**

- Most people will have been exposed to HPV. It is common for men and women to have HPV infection without symptoms, and pass it on without knowing. The vaccine can protect women against this transmission and is most effective if given to girls before the start of sexual activity i.e. before they are exposed to HPV.

### **Who is eligible for the vaccine?**

- GARDASIL® vaccine is offered free to all girls in year 7 school based program in Western Australia (WA).

### **Is the vaccine safe?**

- Yes, the vaccine has been proven to be safe and effective

### **How is the vaccine administered?**

- This vaccine is a course of 3 injections administered in the upper arm or thigh over a six-month period.

### **Will 'boosters' be required, and if so, how often?**

- Since the vaccine is new, more studies need to be done. It is not yet clear if or when boosters will be needed.



## **Are there any contraindications to having this vaccine?**

### **GARDASIL ® should not be given to any person with:**

- A history of hypersensitivity to yeast
- A known anaphylactic reaction to any component of the vaccine
- Vaccine recipients who develop hypersensitivity symptoms following administration of GARDASIL ® should not receive further doses of this vaccine
- This vaccine is not recommended during pregnancy.

## **What are the side effects of this vaccine?**

Common side effects include:

- Pain, redness and swelling at the site of injection
- Less common side effects are: headache, fever and nausea lasting less than 48 hours.

## **Should I have my son vaccinated?**

- GARDASIL ® is effective at preventing genital warts caused by HPV types 6 and 11 in males aged 9-26 years. However, there is not enough evidence at present as to whether a HPV vaccine for males will be cost effective.

## **How much will the vaccine cost?**

- GARDASIL® is free for females in the year 7 school based program (12 years of age) under the National Immunisation Program. For all other people, the cost of the vaccine is around \$460 for a course of 3 injections; this does not include the cost of the visit to the GP who must prescribe the vaccine.

## **How can HPV be detected - Screening**

- At present, cervical cancer screening recommendations have not changed for females who receive HPV vaccine. As the HPV vaccine does not protect against all HPV types that can cause cervical cancer, females are encouraged to have a two yearly cervical screening (Pap smear) test.

## **Where can I get more information about HPV?**

- Immunise Australia Program Info line: 1800 671 811
- Immunise Australia Program website: [www.immunise.health.gov.au](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au)
- Cancer council Helpline: 13 11 20
- Cancer Council [www.cancerouncil.com.au](http://www.cancerouncil.com.au)