

# sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

**factoid**

**62% of UA students who had sexual intercourse in the past year usually or always used a condom.**

(2006 Health and Wellness Survey, n= 3102)

## **Q. I heard there is a new vaccine to prevent cervical cancer. Should I get the vaccine?**

**A.** In June, a highly effective, new vaccine for women was approved by the Centers for Disease Control for the prevention of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), a virus that causes cervical cancer. There are 30-40 of subtypes of HPV, which can be transmitted sexually, leading to genital warts in men and women as well as cervical changes that may progress to cervical cancer. The new vaccine will protect against HPV types 16 and 18 (which account for 70% of all cervical cancer cases) and HPV types 6 and 11 (which cause 90% of all cases of genital warts). It is not a substitute for cervical cancer screening.

Developed by Merck, "Gardasil" is delivered in three separate injections. The second and third dose should be given two and six months after the first dose. The cost is over \$120-140 per injection, bringing the total to over \$360. Because the vaccine (and its approval) is so new, insurance companies are still in the process of determining who will be eligible for coverage.

Getting the vaccine may depend upon your age and sexual history. The recommended target population for Gardasil vaccination includes females between the ages of 11-26. It can be administered to girls as young as age 9. Ideally, Gardasil should be given prior to sexual contact and possible exposure to HPV. The vaccine will not protect you against types to which you may have already been exposed. Women who receive Gardasil should still continue to have cervical cancer screening (pap smear or ThinPrep®).

Campus Health will begin carrying the vaccine in mid-September. It will be administered in CHS to women in the 26 and under age group. For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and search for "HPV vaccine" or [www.gardasil.com](http://www.gardasil.com).

Have a question? Send it to [sextalk@email.arizona.edu](mailto:sextalk@email.arizona.edu)

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