

## **New vaccine program to protect girls from cervical cancer starts this fall**

June 2008

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian,

**Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine**, which protects against most cervical cancers and genital warts, will be offered in schools this fall for girls in grade 6 and 9. This vaccine will continue to be offered routinely in grade 6. The grade 9 program will only be offered for 3 years as a “catch-up” program. HPV vaccine is safe, effective, and has few side effects.

This vaccine is given to girls in Grades 6 and 9 because:

- Girls and women are best protected when they get the HPV vaccine **before** they become sexually active
- The vaccine prevents HPV infection - it doesn't get rid of it once infection occurs
- The lining of the reproductive tract in teenage girls is still developing which makes it easier for them to get infected with HPV

This vaccine will protect your daughter against two types of HPV that cause 7 of 10 cases of cancer of the cervix, and another two types which cause 9 of 10 cases of genital warts.

Right now, the vaccine is not yet approved for boys and young men. Studies will soon show what benefit the vaccine might bring them, so recommendations may change in the future.

Did you know that every year in BC

- 150 women will get cervical cancer
- 40 women will die from the disease
- 6,000 women will develop high-risk changes to the cervix that are precancerous
- 10,000 invasive procedures will be done to stop cancer of the cervix from developing

The HPV vaccine series consists of three shots in the arm, spread over a 6-month period during the school year. Early in the fall, you will receive more news about the program in your child's school, along with consent forms for all the vaccines students need.

To learn more, you may:

- Visit [www.immunizebc.ca](http://www.immunizebc.ca)
- View the BC Health file at: [www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile101.stm](http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile101.stm)
- Talk to your public health nurse, family physician or call BC Nurse Line.

Sincerely,

Public Health Nurse  
Child and Youth Program