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HPV Vaccine and Pregnancy

This sheet talks about the risks that exposure to HPV vaccine can have during pregnancy. With each pregnancy, all women have a 3% to 5% chance of having a baby with a birth defect. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your health care provider.

What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common infection that is transmitted by skin to skin sexual contact. HPV is not just one virus. There are over 200 different kinds of HPV.

It is thought that at least half of all people who are sexually active have been exposed to at least one type of HPV. Most people will have no symptoms of HPV infection and no related health problems. However, some types of the virus can cause genital warts in men and women. Other types of HPV can cause cervical cancer in women or other cancers in both men and women.

If I have HPV, will that cause pregnancy problems?

Even though HPV is common, it is not well studied during pregnancy. HPV is not considered a medical reason to avoid pregnancy.

HPV has not been linked to causing birth defects. Studies have suggested that HPV may contribute to some cases of miscarriage and possibly premature delivery, but it is not clear that there is an increase in risk.

HPV can be passed to a newborn during pregnancy or through the birth canal. Usually this causes no problems for the newborn. In rare cases, a baby can develop warts in his throat that can cause breathing problems. This is a serious condition called juvenile onset recurrent respiratory papillomatosis (JORRP).

What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine provides protection against some types of HPV. Two currently available brands of the HPV vaccine are Gardasil[®] and Cervarix[®]. Gardasil[®] provides protection against HPV types 6, 11, 16, and 18. Cervarix[®] provides protection against HPV types 16 and 18.

Neither of these vaccines contains a live virus. This means they are noninfectious and cannot give a person HPV. The vaccines are given as an injection in a series of three doses on three separate occasions. Gardasil[®] is licensed for males and females ages 9-26 years old, and Cervarix[®] is licensed for females age 10-25 years old. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that the three doses be given between the ages 11-12 because the vaccine provides the most protection when given prior to any HPV exposure.

I just got the HPV vaccine, how long should I wait until I get pregnant?

Since the HPV vaccine is noninfectious, there is no specific recommended waiting period before attempting to get pregnant.

I am pregnant, should I get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women because it is most effective

prior to sexual contact and not well studied in pregnancy.

I didn't know I was pregnant when I got the HPV vaccine, is there a risk to my baby?

Noninfectious vaccines are considered to be a low risk during pregnancy. Additionally, studies in pregnant animals with the HPV vaccine found no increase in birth defects. Studies are ongoing with human exposures to the vaccine during pregnancy.

The manufacturer of Cervarix[®] reported higher rates of miscarriage in women receiving the vaccine close to the start of their pregnancy. However, the rate of miscarriage was still within the rate of miscarriages expected for the general population (women who had not received the vaccine).

To be conservative, you should wait until after pregnancy to complete any remaining shots in the series.

Can I receive the HPV vaccine while breastfeeding?

Yes. Noninfectious vaccines like the HPV vaccine are compatible with breastfeeding.

The father of the baby received the HPV vaccine around the time that I got pregnant. Is there a risk to the baby?

No. There is no evidence that vaccines given to men will affect the sperm, and vaccines given to men should not be able to reach a developing baby.

OTIS is currently conducting the [HPV Vaccine in Pregnancy Study](#). The purpose of the study is to learn more about HPV vaccines in pregnancy. If you are pregnant and have received the HPV vaccine, and you are interested in learning more about this study,

please contact the OTIS Studies Coordinating Center at 877-311-8972.

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Selected References:

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*If you have questions about the information on this fact sheet or other exposures during pregnancy, call **OTIS at 1-866-626-6847.***