

Asia & Oceania Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecology (AOFOG)
Advisory Recommendations for
Vaccination against Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Infection
for the prevention of Cervical Cancer

Preamble

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines are now widely available for the purpose of cervical cancer prevention.
- The objective of the AOFOG Advisory Recommendations is to provide information on the use of HPV vaccine for the purpose of cervical cancer prevention and the need to continue with the current cervical screening programs.

General

- The Human Papilloma Virus (high-risk genotypes) is a necessary causal factor of cervical cancers.
- The HPV Vaccine is a prophylactic vaccine. It protects against infection of HPV genotypes (HPV-16 and HPV-18) that account for about 70% of HPV-related cervical cancers.
- The HPV vaccine is not therapeutic. It does not treat existing cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (cervical pre-cancers).

Cervical Cancer Screening

- Women who have been vaccinated with the HPV vaccine should continue with the cervical cancer screening as per the recommendations in their resident country.

Vaccination Target Group

- The vaccine has been approved for use in females from 9 years old and the age licensure varies between countries. In some countries, it has also been approved for use in males.
- It should target females at the most convenient and optimal age (12-16 years old) for vaccination before their first sexual exposure.

Counseling before Vaccination

- A full explanation of the role, action and usefulness of the vaccine should be provided for the woman or her parent/guardian where applicable, before vaccination.
- The explanation should typically include: the role of HPV in cervical carcinogenesis (in particular HPV-16 and HPV-18); trial results and expectations; immunological responses; safety and efficacy; as well as answer queries on issues, as highlighted in this document.

HPV Testing before Vaccination

- Testing for HPV is currently not recommended before vaccination.

Vaccination of Sexually Active Women

- Sexually active women and women with previous abnormal cervical cytology can receive the HPV vaccine. But the benefits may be limited to the protection against infection of HPV genotypes with which they have not been infected.
- Women who have been infected with vaccine HPV-type (serologically positive) and has cleared of the cervical infection (DNA negative), appears to have similar protective effects as those who are naïve to the same vaccine HPV-type.

Special Situations

Women With Previous Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia (CIN)

- The vaccine can be given to patients with previous CIN, but the benefits may be limited to the protection against infection of HPV genotypes (and related CIN) with which they have not been infected.
- It must be emphasized that cervical cytology surveillance and corresponding management must continue.

Pregnancy and Lactating Women

- The use of the vaccine in pregnancy is not recommended, although no teratogenic effect caused by the vaccine has been reported.
- There is no evidence to show that the HPV vaccine adversely affects fertility, pregnancy or infant outcome.

- Women who are planning to conceive are advised to defer vaccination until after delivery.
- Women who become pregnant before completion of vaccination are advised to postpone the remaining dose until after the pregnancy.
- Termination of pregnancy is not indicated for women who become inadvertently pregnant during the course of vaccination.
- Lactating women can receive the HPV vaccine and still continue breastfeeding because it is a vaccine without live viral DNA.

Immunosuppressed Patients

- Immunosuppression is not a contraindication to vaccination. However, the immune response to the HPV vaccine may be less competent in these women compared with a healthy individual.

Off-Label Use

- When the HPV vaccine is employed outside of licensure, e.g. beyond the approved ages or for the males, a full explanation by the physician should be given to the vaccinee and an informed consent obtained.

Contraindications and Precautions

- The HPV vaccine is contraindicated for people with a history of hypersensitivity to any vaccine component.
- Vaccination of people with moderate or severe acute illnesses should be deferred until after the illness improves.

The AFOG Advisory Recommendations was drafted at the Singapore Meeting on 2 May 2008, held in conjunction with the Inauguration of the AFOG Cervical Cancer Awareness Month and endorsed by AFOG Council on 27 June 2008, at the AFOG Council Meeting held in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Produced by
AFOG Gynaecological Oncology Committee