



## What To Tell Your Daughter About the New HPV Vaccine

At her pre-adolescent physical, your daughter will probably be vaccinated against the human papillomavirus (HPV). Spread through skin-to-skin and sexual contact, HPV causes most cervical cancers and genital warts cases. There's a new vaccine against HPV, and federal health experts recently recommended that it be given routinely to 11- to 12-year-olds (and on request to 9- to 26-year-olds) as an important step in protecting their future health.

Do you need to talk to your daughter about sex—and sexually transmitted diseases—before her physical?

Probably not. "Most kids accept that vaccines are a fact of life," says Sarah Stevens, M.D., adolescent medicine specialist at Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network. "You don't need to have a long discussion about how she might catch the infection that the vaccine prevents."

As long as your daughter is not sexually active, simply tell her that she'll receive a vaccine that prevents the infection that can cause cervical cancer. The discussion about sexuality can wait.

When your daughter is older and ready for that talk, make sure she understands the following:

Once she becomes sexually active, even though she's had the HPV vaccine she'll still need regular Pap tests to detect cancerous and precancerous cells in her cervix. The vaccine reduces her risk for developing cervical cancer, but it doesn't eliminate the risk.

The vaccine prevents the virus that causes most cervical cancers, but it doesn't protect her from the many other viruses spread through sexual contact. Abstinence, condoms and limiting the number of sexual partners will reduce her risk for AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.



LEHIGH VALLEY HOSPITAL  
Cedar Crest & I-78, Allentown  
17th & Chew Streets, Allentown

LEHIGH VALLEY HOSPITAL—  
MUHLENBERG  
Route 22 & Schoenersville Road  
Bethlehem

[www.lvh.org](http://www.lvh.org)  
610-402-CARE

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or for a physician referral,  
call 610-402-CARE