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# **Why Haven't More Women Received The HPV Vaccine?**

The HPV vaccine, available since 2006, has reached only 25 percent of the girls and young women who should have received it by now. Even fewer have completed the three-shot series.

I'm surprised and disappointed.

The HPV vaccine, which protects against the strains of human papillomavirus involved in most cases of genital warts and cervical cancer, was the topic of my blog post on October 7, 2008. At that time, I explained the value of the HPV vaccine and examined a few of the controversies surrounding it.

Now it's time to consider some possible reasons why more girls and women aren't getting the HPV vaccine.

#### Cost

A three-shot series costs several hundred dollars, which puts it out of the affordable range for many young women and parents of pre-teen girls. If cost is one of your obstacles, find out whether the shots really will set you back as much as you think. Start by checking directly with your insurance company, if you're insured through an employer. Many health plans are covering HPV immunization. After all, the vaccination is far less expensive than the alternative - abnormal Pap smears and the followup examinations and treatment they require.

Medicaid, the government-financed health insurance program for the poor, also covers HPV immunization for eligible girls and young women.

#### Availability

Because the HPV vaccine is expensive, many clinics can't afford to keep it in stock. If your clinic does not carry HPV immunizations, check with your county public health department to find out where the shots are offered and how you can receive all three.

#### Safety

Parents in particular are concerned about the safety of HPV immunization. The risks, however, are exceedingly small. The vaccination is made from viruslike particles, not from fully formed, infection-causing HPV. It can't give you the disease.

Also, no serious side effects have been reported. Pain and redness are common at the site of the immunization, and flu or cold symptoms sometimes occur. You may want to schedule the immunization for a time when you can take it easy for a few days if these symptoms develop.

#### Implications

Unlike the first three factors, which are matters of verifiable fact, this factor is rooted in a conflict of belief. Some people oppose HPV immunization for the same reason they oppose sex education: They view both as implied endorsements of promiscuity. But if fear of HPV and other STDs is such a deterrent to promiscuity, why are STD rates rising every year, especially among adolescent girls and young women?

It's impossible for everyone to agree on a single standard of sexual morality, let alone on the right way for school and health officials to uphold that standard. On the other hand, everyone recognizes the essential good of saving many thousands of women - mothers, wives, sisters and daughters - from needless premature death.

If you have questions and thoughts about the HPV vaccine, post them here or discuss them with your health care provider. Free [Medical Advice](#) published By [Dr Vivienne Balonwu](#).

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