



HPV Vaccines After Exposure

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Dear OncoLink "Ask The Experts,"

Can/should you get the vaccine if you have already had HPV?

Christina S. Chu, MD, Assistant Professor of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology at the University of Pennsylvania Health System, responds:

If you already have HPV, you can certainly get the Gardasil vaccine.

The vaccine gives protection against 4 different types. Even if you have contracted one of the 4, you may still gain immunity to the three other strains.

Gloria DiLullo, MSN, CRNP, OncoLink Medical Oncology Educational Content Specialist, responds:

The vaccines will only work in women who have not already been exposed to the types of HPV covered by the vaccine. This means that the vaccines will not prevent HPV in women who have already had these HPV types. (This is why it is important to get vaccinated before being exposed.) Most often a woman does not know what types she has been exposed to. The testing for HPV does not always specify the type when it is a positive test. A negative test does not tell you if you have been exposed to HPV in the past and now it has resolved. Therefore, it is still beneficial to get the vaccine in case you were exposed to a different type.

This question and answer was part of the OncoLink Brown Bag Chat Series, How Much Do You Know About HPV?
[View the entire transcript here.](#)

1/14/10

No

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