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# HPV Vaccine

## A sure lifesaver for thousands

By Dr. Andrew Weil, M.D.

SPECIAL TO THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

**I have a teenage daughter, and I'm wondering about getting her the vaccine that prevents cervical cancer. Is it really safe?**

The vaccine you're wondering about protects against infection with two strains of the human papillomavirus (HPV), which are responsible for 70 percent of all cases of cervical cancer.

The FDA approved the vaccine (Gardasil) in June 2006, and that same month, a federal advisory panel on immunization practices recommended that all 11- and 12-year-old girls be vaccinated. **More than half of all men and women pick up HPV within a year of becoming sexually active. The vaccine won't work for women who are already infected with HPV, which is why it's important to immunize young girls before they become sexually active.**

In 90 percent of all cases, HPV infections clear up on their own and cause no obvious symptoms (except, in some cases, genital warts; the new vaccine will also protect women against the viruses responsible for 90 percent of all cases of warts).

About 10,000 women in the United States develop cervical cancer every year, and the disease leads to about 3,900 deaths annually. Most of those cases and deaths could be prevented if all women had Pap smears. Worldwide, cervical cancer kills more than 288,000 women a year.

The vaccine undoubtedly will save thousands of lives around the world among your daughter's generation and future generations of women.



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