Hot Shot

The fight over mandatory HPV vaccinations for girls

November 28, 2006 By Seni George

Your mother's advice for avoiding STDs was to keep your legs crossed. But these days, educating our girls about sexually transmitted infection requires Politics 101.

The Food and Drug Administration has approved a vaccine for females that protects against certain types of the human papillomavirus (HPV), which strikes roughly half of sexually active people. Some of its strains cause genital warts or cervical cancer. The vaccine works best when girls are immunized before becoming sexually active, so many experts recommend vaccinating all 11- and 12-year-olds. Two states—Michigan and New Jersey—have introduced legislation to require girls entering the sixth grade to get vaccinated, and other states are considering the same.

But some Christian conservatives, many of whom have the ear of the Bush administration, argue that this encourages promiscuity and that the decision to give girls the vaccine should be made by parents, not the government. According to a study published in *Emerging Infectious Diseases* in 2003, if all 12-year-old girls in the U.S. were vaccinated, more than 1,300 deaths from cervical cancer could be prevented. There is also a positive correlation between school immunization requirements and help in eliminating a disease's racial disparities. "Black women are disproportionately affected by cervical cancer—and should be targeted to receive the vaccine," says Loida E. Bonney, MD, of Miriam Hospital in Providence.

Most insurers cover the vaccine, but check to make sure yours does, and ask local health officials to make it mandatory. For more information, visit American Social Health's website, www.ashastd.org.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/Hot-Shot-10921-2334