Is Gardasil Good Enough for Your Girls?

Hear both sides of the HPV vaccine debate.

August 29, 2007 By Andrea Collier

Before Gardasil hit the market last year, Merck & Co., its manufacter, already dubbed it “The Holy Grail.” The FDA-approved vaccine is nearly 100 percent effective in protecting young females (9 to 26) who have not been exposed to cancer-causing strains of human papilloma virus (HPV), the sexually transmitted disease that causes 70 percent of all cervical cancers. While this could prevent future deaths (3,700 die annually from cervical cancer), eyebrows have been raised about the possible message it sends to teens and the drug’s lack of long-term testing. Should your daughter be vaccinated? Two black female physicians weigh in.

Get It Done

“Currently, it’s the best way to protect our girls. I get questions from parents who wonder if it will promote sexual activity. This is not a moral issue, it is a health issue.”

Alane Laws-Barker, MD, obstetrician/gynecologist, Lansing, Michigan

Not So Fast

“What will happen to women 5, 10 or 20 years from now? More studies need to be done. Stressing the importance of regular Pap smears to detect HPV and precancerous conditions may be a safer alternative.”

Margaret Aguwa, DO, family practitioner, East Lansing, Michigan

FYI

Not all insurers pay for the three-spot regimen ($360), but some federal health programs, including Vaccines for Children (VFC), are covering low-income girls and teens. Talk to your child’s health care providers before making any decisions.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/gardasil-hpv-vaccine-12913-1629