



## **Protect your child from Human Papillomavirus (HPV)**

### **What is HPV?**

HPV is a common virus that infects the genital area and lining of the cervix. There are many types of the HPV virus. Some types of HPV can slowly develop into cancer if not found and treated. Other types may develop into warts that are generally not harmful. To prevent the spread of this virus, community/public health nurses will offer this vaccine to all grade six female students. This will be done in school. Three needles are given; usually two in the fall (two months apart) and the third in the spring. It is given in the upper arm.

### **How is HPV spread?**

Genital HPV can be spread by close contact during sexual activity with a person who has the virus. Most infections do not cause symptoms and people do not know they have the infection. Three out of four people who have had sex have been in contact with some type of HPV. The best way to avoid HPV infection is to not have any sexual contact. Condoms can offer some protection from HPV and other sexually transmitted infections. However, this virus can be present on skin not covered by the condom so it can still spread by skin to skin contact.

### **Why do we recommend a vaccine for HPV?**

Most of the time, HPV goes away on its own and does not cause any health problems. However, sometimes the infection will linger and create changes in the cells of the cervix that can progress to cancer. The HPV vaccine will reduce the risk of this occurring.

### **Why give the vaccine to females in grade six?**

The vaccination works best when it is given to pre-adolescent females before they start having sexual contact. It does not work as well for those who were exposed to the virus before getting the vaccine.

### **Is the HPV vaccine safe?**

Yes the vaccine is safe, works well and has few side effects. The most common side effects include slight fever, pain, and swelling and redness at the needle site.

### **Why are three needles needed?**

One or two needles will not provide full protection against HPV. For complete protection all three doses are necessary. Needles must be given over a six-month period.

### **Remember the Pap test**

A pap test is the only way to find changes in the cells of your cervix that could lead to cervical cancer later in life. Females of all ages should have regular Pap testing once they become sexually active

### **Is this vaccine mandatory?**

No it is not mandatory. Consent forms will be provided to parents/guardians to indicate if they wish for the child to be vaccinated.