

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Program For Grade Eight Females

Talking to our daughters about the HPV vaccine

The Ontario government is providing the HPV vaccine free of charge to Grade 8 girls as a means of preventing HPV infection and its possible consequences. Whether or not you choose to have your daughter vaccinated at this time, it is good for her to understand this issue so that she will not be misinformed by her peers.

The Human Papillomavirus is a very common virus transmitted through sexual activity. The HPV vaccine is being given to grade 8 girls because the HPV vaccine is most effective if given to females before they are sexually active. You may find the following tips helpful in getting over any nervousness you might feel about discussing this and other sensitive, health-related topics:

- **It's OK to feel embarrassed.** The hardest part in talking to your child about human sexuality is getting started. Admitting to your shyness may help your daughter let down her guard.
- **Having a sense of humour can help.** Get ready to blush or laugh about being nervous and say, "My mom never talked to me about this."
- **Understand your own attitudes and beliefs.** Children need to know your values and why you think they are important.
- **Be prepared.** Children want direct and honest information. Research the facts if you do not know the answers.
- **Look for opportunities to listen, talk and share.** You may need to initiate conversation. Use moments that arise in everyday life such as watching TV, driving to activities, or discussing topics from school. Ask your child's opinion about what they see in magazines or on the internet. An open approach will encourage communication.
- **Talk about responsibility.** Sexual activity can have life changing consequences. You should not underestimate the impact you can have on your daughter's opinions by discussing this with her. The main thing you want is for her to come away from your discussion saying, "I now have some accurate information, and I need to respect and protect my body."

Please refer to the information included in this package to help you talk to your daughter about HPV and the HPV vaccine, and if you have any questions or concerns please call York Region Health Services *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653.