

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

61% of UA students had vaginal or anal intercourse within the past school year. (2011 Health & Wellness Survey, n=2,479)

Q I had two of the three HPV vaccine shots done last year but became extremely busy around the time the third one was due and never got around to having it done. Am I immune? Can I still get the final shot and will it still be effective? Is there a safe way to test for immunity? My girlfriend and I have clean histories.

A. With the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine, individuals are encouraged to adhere to the initial, 2-, and 6-month vaccination schedule. Patients often do not follow-up for their (HPV) immunizations on schedule. While it's impossible to say exactly HOW immune you are after just two shots, research indicates that you have some level of protection from the strains of the virus that are associated with genital warts, cervical, anal, and penile cancers. As to testing for your immunity, there's currently not an easy, affordable, reliable test to check for protective effect.

Merck, the makers of Gardasil, provided us with published medical literature of clinical research studies that indicate a benefit in getting the 3rd dose... as soon as possible. In one study, vaccine effectiveness remained high in persons who did not follow the recommended schedule, suggesting some flexibility in the spacing of doses. In other clinical studies, effectiveness has been demonstrated in individuals who have received all 3 doses within a 1-year period. More data on the timing and number of doses and their impact on efficacy are needed.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended *routine* use of Gardasil HPV vaccine in males aged 11 or 12 years. ACIP also recommended vaccination for males aged 13 through 21 years who have not been vaccinated previously or who have not completed the 3-dose series.

The CDC's ACIP position on Gardasil HPV vaccination for females is following:

11- to 12-year-old females should be vaccinated *routinely* and 13- to 26-year-old females should be vaccinated if not previously vaccinated.

Bottom line? Go get your 3rd (and final) shot as soon as you can.

Sources: Merck & Co, Inc., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and www.gardasil.com



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