



# HEALTH MATTERS

## • I N - F O C U S •

### *Human Papillomavirus (HPV)*

#### *Introduction*

HPV infection (HPV 16 & 18) is a leading cause of cervical cancer worldwide. It is reported that every 2 minutes a woman dies from cervical cancer. Routine vaccination against HPV can prevent the vast majority of cases. HPV vaccines combined with cervical cancer screening play a central role on the path to eliminating this deadly disease.

#### *What is HPV?*

HPV is a viral infection that commonly causes skin or mucous membrane growths (Warts). HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the world. Most HPV infections don't lead to cancer, but some types such as HPV 16 & 18 (high risk types of HPV) can lead to chronic infections and pre-cancerous growths. Cervical cancer is the 4th most common cancer in women worldwide. Sub - Saharan Africa, Central America and south East Asia are recorded as having the highest rate of cervical cancer deaths.

#### *How is it transmitted?*

These infections are often transmitted sexually or through skin-to-skin contact.



#### *Symptoms*

HPV does not usually cause any symptoms. Most people who have it do not realise and do not have any problems. But sometimes the virus can cause painless growths or lumps (warts) around your vagina, penis or anus.

#### *Prevention & Screening*

**Prevention:** The involvement of parents by giving consent is crucial for young girls to be vaccinated at schools.

**Screening:** The protocol at 1 Military Hospital is for women to undergo routine pap smear every 3 years. Women at risk, must have a yearly pap smear done. Cervical cancer screening is important and early treatment is effective if conducted early.

#### *Conclusion*

Though HPV is not curable it can be prevented with the use of HPV vaccinations. The overall wellbeing of women and the life expectancy of girls and women will improve as HPV vaccine reduces the rate of infection and the incidence of cervical cancer.

#### References:

- Yousefi,Z., Araia, H., Ghaedrahamati, F., Bakhtiari,T., Azizi, M., Bastan,R., Hosseini,R..& Eskkandari, N.(2022). An update on human papilloma virus vaccines: History, types, protection and efficacy. *Frontiers in Immunology*.
- Brotherton J.M.L Impact of HPV Vaccination: Achievements and Future Challenges. *Papillomavirus Res* (2019).
- National Department of Health/ Unicef HPV Information. *Olds' Maternal-Newborn Nursing & Women's health Across the Lifespan*
- Davidson London Ladewig,.11<sup>th</sup> edition <https://www.unicef.org/stories/fast-facts-hpv-cervical> cancer dd 12 Feb 2025.