

4.4 Diseases where vaccination might be recommended in the future.

1.1.1 Human papilloma virus infection

Human Papilloma virus (HPV) is a sexually transmitted disease. Whilst most HPV infections are asymptomatic and transient, HPV is of clinical and public health importance because persistent infection with certain oncogenic types can lead to cervical cancer. HPV is a common sexually transmitted infection and has been shown to affect 50-80% of women at least once in their lifetime. Infection with particular strains of the virus, known as "high risk types" (HPV types 6, 11, 16, 18, 31 and 35) particularly associated with the development of cervical cancer. HPV 16 and 18 are the most common high-risk types found in cervical cancer.

HPV Vaccine

There is no national recommendation on the use of this vaccine at this time. The HPV vaccine has been developed to prevent cervical cancer and other diseases in females caused by certain types of genital human papillomavirus. This vaccine (given in a 3 dose schedule), made from non-infectious HPV-like particles, offers a promising new approach to the prevention of HPV and associated conditions. However, this vaccine will not replace other prevention strategies since it will not work for all genital HPV types.

Ideally, the vaccine should be administered before onset of sexual activity, but females who are sexually active may also benefit from vaccinations. Females who have not been infected with any vaccine HPV type would receive the full benefit of vaccination. Females who already have been infected with one or more HPV type would still get protection from the vaccine types they have not acquired. However, some studies have documented better serological responses among 9-15 year olds than among older adolescents and women.

The evidence from studies to date demonstrates a high level of efficacy and safety. However, it is likely to be many years before the full impact of the vaccine can be evaluated. The duration of vaccine protection is also unclear. Current studies (with five-year follow-up) indicate that the vaccine is effective for at least five years, with no evidence of waning immunity during that time period.

2.2.2 Rotavirus

Rotaviruses are the commonest cause of childhood diarrhoea. The illness is characterised by sudden onset of diarrhoea and vomiting and often with mild fever. Rotavirus vaccine is not routinely recommended in Ireland. This vaccine was licenced in Europe in 2006 and has been launched as a private market paediatric vaccine in many European markets since approval, pending its inclusion as appropriate onto national vaccination schedules. A two-dose oral vaccine has been licenced in Ireland since May 2007

4.5 Useful resources

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