



Capel Parish Nurses: *Serving the Community of Capel St Mary*

Cervical Cancer Vaccination

A friend contacted me this morning to ask my opinion as a parent and a nurse as to whether she should get her daughter vaccinated with the HPV vaccine at school. They had publicly asked on Facebook and had a variety of replies, including lots of negative ones. I thought I would debunk some of those for you all. Let's play some true or false:

1. Cervical cancer is the third most common cancer in women under 35 years old – False – it is in fact the second. Cancer research UK says 2,900 women a year are diagnosed with cervical cancer – that is around 8 women a day. Around 400 of these go on to die from it.
2. HPV stands for Human Papilloma Virus – True. There are in fact over 100 HPV strains, 40 of which effect the genital area.
3. The HPV vaccine only covers a few strains out of the 100 – this is true also. Although it only covers HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18 – these make up for 70-80% of all cervical and anal cancers caused by the HPV virus and 90% of genital warts (medicines.org.uk).
4. Your child needs to still have their smear test when they reach 25 years old – True. The vaccine does not prevent all types of cervical cancer therefore it is important that people still go for their routine cervical screening.
5. Adolescent girls who have the vaccination will reduce their risk of getting cervical cancer by over 70% - True (NHS, 2014).
6. The vaccine includes weed killer, de-icer, mercury and faeces of aborted babies – needless to say, this is false! This shocked me that someone would believe this when they were told it, but they did and it prevented them from having their daughter vaccinated. I have looked into the ingredients on the manufacturer's website and it does not contain any of the above. A complete list of the ingredients for the vaccine is in the patient information leaflet (PIL) www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/19033/pil/gardasil and the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC): www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/19016/SPC/gardasil/.
7. The benefits of the vaccine outweigh any potential side effect – absolutely true. It is very common to get a sore red arm after any vaccination and this one is no different. Some people report a headache or mild fever – paracetamol can be taken if needed. However, more serious side effects are very uncommon and the benefit of protection against cervical cancer by far outweighs any risk of side effect.

If you are still sitting on the fence about whether to have your daughter vaccinated against HPV or not then I would encourage you to research it but research it with caution. I would advise against articles from newspapers, Netmums and other similar sources. Research it through NHS websites and medical ones. As a parent and a nurse: will I be vaccinating my girls when they are old enough? Absolutely!

Blessings,

Caroline, your Parish Nurse

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