# A Pharmacist's Guide to Initiating Discussions about HPV Prevention Against Head and Neck Cancers



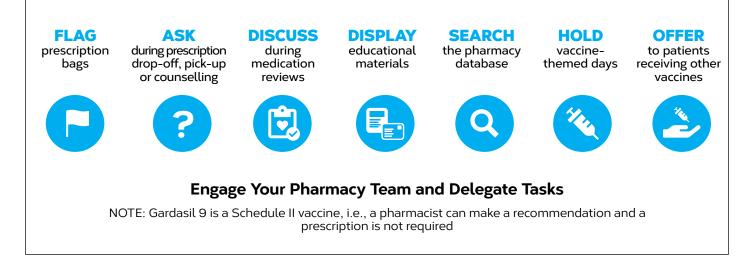
HPV infections are commonly associated with causing cancers related to the genital areas, including cervical, vulvar, vaginal and anal cancers, but it can also cause head and neck cancers.<sup>i</sup> The focus of this tool will be on Gardasil 9 and its use to prevent head and neck cancers as it is currently the only HPV vaccine in Canada approved (with conditions) for this indication.<sup>ii,iii</sup> For general information about all HPV vaccines and their approved indications, please refer to the <u>HPV chapter</u> of the Canadian Immunization Guide.<sup>^</sup>

### Gardasil 9 – Prevention of Diseases"

For individuals 9-45 years of age <sup>^</sup>	HPV-types	Ŷ	ď
Cervical cancers	16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52, and 58	$\checkmark$	×
Vulvar cancers		✓	×
Vaginal cancers		✓	×
Anal cancers		$\checkmark$	✓
Oropharyngeal cancers <sup>-</sup>		✓	✓
Head and neck cancers (others) <sup>-</sup>		$\checkmark$	✓
Genital warts	6 and 11	✓	✓

Gardasil 9 also provides prevention against some precancerous or dysplastic lesions associated with the above HPV types

## **Strategies to Identify Appropriate Patients**



## Sample Discussion Guide

#### **Type of Interaction**

Patient asks about HPV vaccination

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#### **Sample Discussion**

I am glad you are interested in learning more about HPV vaccines.

- HPV is a group of viruses that can cause diseases like genital cancers and warts.<sup>i</sup>
- HPV infection can also cause head and neck cancers.<sup>i</sup> About 60-73% of oropharyngeal cancers are related to HPV and data from 2012 showed that males were 4.5 times more likely to be affected than females.<sup>ivv</sup>
- The virus is spread by skin-to-skin-contact, e.g., sexual contact.<sup>i</sup>
- If not immunized, approximately 3 out of 4 sexually active individuals will have at least one HPV infection during their lifetime.<sup>iv</sup>
- For most individuals HPV clears on its own, but in some cases, cancer may develop if the virus does not clear.<sup>i</sup>
- You can protect yourself and your loved ones by getting the HPV vaccine, which is a safe and effective way to prevent lasting infections from some of the HPV types.<sup>iv</sup>

Pharmacist gathers information from the patient to determine if they may benefit from Gardasil 9 vaccination (refer to *Some Questions to Consider* if not done already)

If vaccine is recommended

### Discuss Vaccine Schedules<sup>ii</sup>

Patient Group#	Number of Doses	Recommended Dosing Interval	
	2	0 and between 5-13 months	
9-14 years of age	3	0, 2 and 6 months	
≥15 years of age	3	0, 2 and 6 months	

**Note:** The vaccine schedules are based on the recommended dose in the product monograph which may differ from NACI and/or provincial guidance.<sup>^</sup>

### **Discuss Vaccine Costs**

- Eligible individuals for publicly funded doses:vi,vii
  - Grade 7 students in Ontario
  - Exception: Grades 8-12 students in Ontario (if missed the Grade 7 vaccination schedule)
    MSM individuals 9-26 years of age (High Risk Vaccine Program)
    Exception: MSM individuals born in 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 or 1997 (missed doses due to the
- COVID-19 pandemic; complete series by December 31, 2024)
  Private third-party coverage: Depends on the patient's private insurance plan; some may cover all
- or part of the cost. Patients should contact their private insurer for more information, e.g., need for a prescription, coverage under a health spending account, etc.

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• Out of pocket expenses: Provide patient with cost of the vaccine

Pharmacist identifies patients who may benefit from Gardasil 9 vaccination<sup>^</sup>

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# Some Questions to Consider

- Is the vaccine **indicated**?
- Does the patient have risk factors for acquiring an HPV infection?
- Is the patient fully vaccinated against HPV?
- Does the patient have any contraindications to getting the vaccine?

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e hesitant/unreceptive response

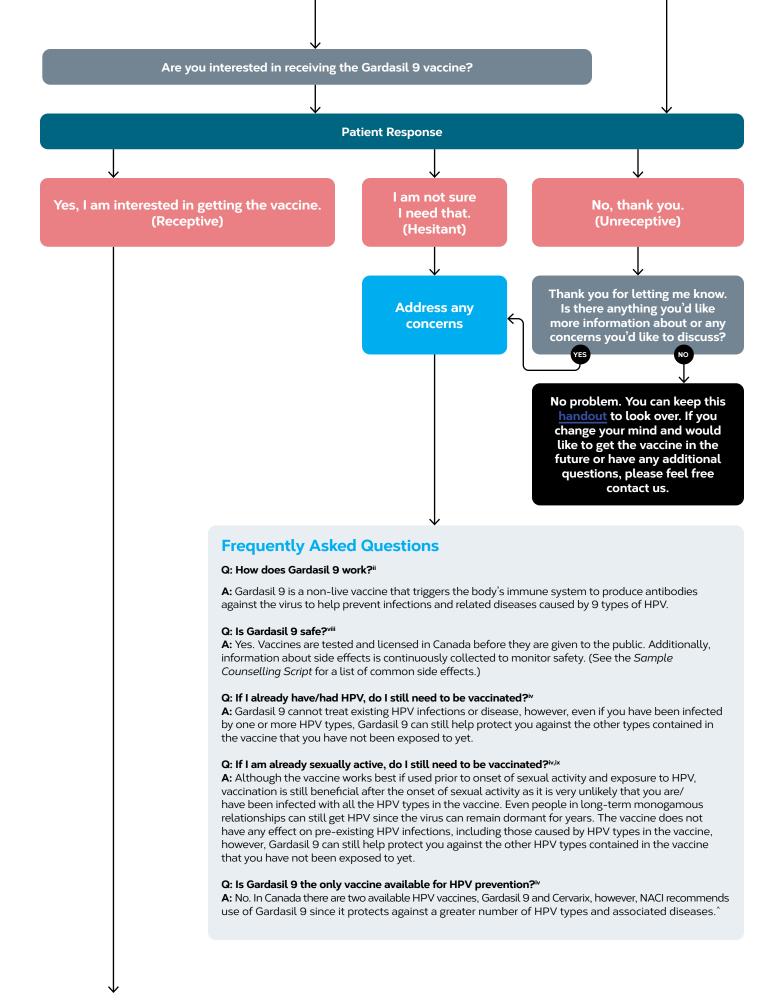
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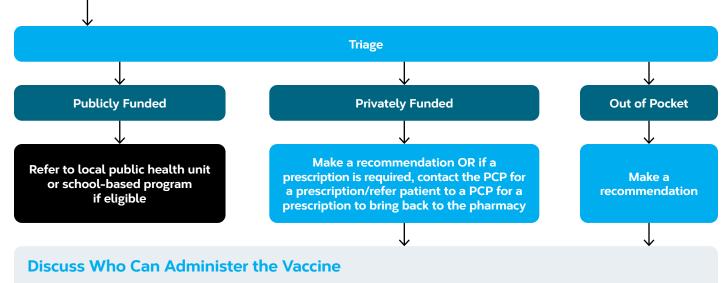
• Does the patient have any **special conditions** that may prevent from getting the vaccine?

If vaccine is reco

You may be at risk of developing HPV-related cancers including head and neck cancers. There is a vaccine called Gardasil 9 that can help with prevention. Would you like to learn more?

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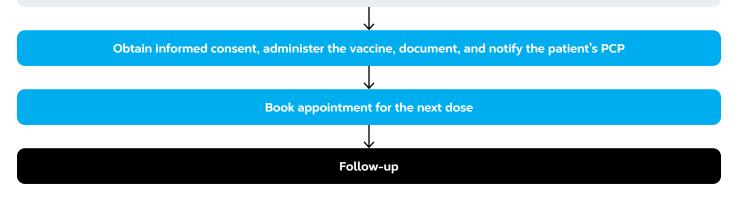


- **Pharmacist:** Inform patient of the pharmacy's vaccine administration fee if applicable; OPA members can also refer to OPA's Suggested Fee Guide.
- Primary care provider: Inform patient they have the option to take the vaccine to their primary care provider to administer.



## Sample Counselling Script

- Gardasil 9 helps to prevent infections and diseases (e.g., cervical, vulvar, vaginal, anal, and head and neck cancers) related to the 9 HPV types included in the vaccine, however, it has no effect on current/prior infections or other types of HPV.<sup>1,11</sup>
- You should still receive regular cancer screening as appropriate (e.g., routine Pap tests), engage in safe sex practices (e.g., using condoms), and monitor for any abnormal signs and symptoms that require immediate medical attention.<sup>1</sup>
- Other preventive measures against head and neck cancers include avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption in addition to eating a diet high in fruits and vegetables.<sup>x</sup>
- Gardasil 9 may cause side effects, but most are usually mild to moderate and last only a few days:<sup>w</sup>
   Injection-site reactions: Pain, swelling, redness, itching, bruising, bleeding, lump at injection site<sup>a</sup>
  - Others: Headache, fever, nausea, dizziness, tiredness, diarrhea, abdominal pain, sore throat
- Some rare side effects require immediate medical attention, such as allergic reactions (e.g., rash, hives, wheezing and difficulty breathing).<sup>#</sup>
- If any side effects become serious, contact your healthcare provider immediately. These are not all the possible side effects and if you experience any other side effects that are concerning, please contact your healthcare provider.
- · Please stay in the pharmacy for 15 minutes after immunization for monitoring in case you have any rare but serious reactions.



\* The Canadian Immunization Guide chapter on HPV vaccines was updated on July 24, 2024 with new recommendations. These may not all be reflected in this tool. Information on any updates to provincial guidance were not yet available at the time of publication of this tool.

- Approved (with conditions) pending additional studies to verify the vaccine's clinical benefit
- # Immunocompetent, non-HIV infected

HPV: human papillomavirus; MSM: men who have sex with men; NACI: National Advisory Committee on Immunization; PCP: primary care provider

#### DISCLAIMER

This tool was developed by the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) with a grant provided by Merck Canada. The information provided in this document is intended to assist pharmacists with initiating discussions with patients about Gardasil 9 for the prevention of head and neck cancers but is not meant to be comprehensive and does not replace professional judgement and responsibilities. It is provided without warranty of any kind by OPA and OPA assumes no responsibility for any errors, omissions or inaccuracies therein. The decision for use and application of this document is the responsibility of the user. OPA assumes no liability for such use and application or any resulting outcomes. It is the responsibility of the pharmacy professional to use professional judgment in evaluating this material in light of any relevant clinical or situational data. It is intended to supplement materials provided by regulatory authorities, and should there be any discrepancies, municipal, provincial, and federal laws, policies and guidelines shall prevail. The information provided in this document are current at the time of publication. Pharmacy professionals are encouraged to confirm information with additional resources.

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