



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

The Church in Central and Southern Indiana

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Statement for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis Regarding the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

In April 2007, the General Assembly of the State of Indiana enacted legislation requiring schools throughout the state to provide parents of students entering grade six with information concerning the link between cervical cancer and the human papillomavirus (HPV) infection and advise them that an immunization against the HPV infection is now available (Indiana Code: 20-34-4-3).

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis, the Office of Catholic Education and the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) appreciate the seriousness of healthcare issues involved with the human papillomavirus (HPV) infection and we are pleased that the Indiana General Assembly has recognized parents as the primary educators of their child/children. As is stated in the law, the decision to vaccinate (or not to vaccinate) your child/children is seen as a parent's decision and responsibility.

To make good decisions, parents and young women/men need accurate information regarding the vaccine. The vaccine, called Gardasil, has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to protect against two strains of HPV that are responsible for 70 percent of cervical cancer. The vaccine also protects against two other strains of the virus that cause 90 percent of genital warts. However, the vaccine is not a panacea. Parents and their children must also realize the following about the vaccine:

- The vaccine will not prevent the transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or other sexually transmitted diseases;
- The vaccine will not prevent infections from other strains of HPV;
- The vaccine will not prevent infections from all HPV strains that cause cervical cancer;
- The vaccine will not eliminate the need for regular screening.

The Church teaches that a primary role of Catholic educators is to provide assistance to parents in understanding the teachings of our Catholic faith so that they can form their children in the Faith. To this end, parents should know that there is no moral objection to the vaccine itself and the prevalence of HPV in the reproductive age population makes the possibility of exposure to the virus significant. (Source: National Catholic Bioethics Center).

Whether you choose to vaccinate your daughter/son or not, please use this opportunity to speak with your child/children about God's plan for each of us as sexual beings. Talk with your child/children and emphasize that the most effective way to avoid contracting any sexually transmitted disease is to abstain from sexual activity before marriage and to remain faithful within marriage. Share with your child/children that sex is sacred and is beautiful within the context of marriage. We believe that parents can and will make prudent decisions when provided with full and accurate information.

Gina Kuntz Fleming
Superintendent of Catholic Schools