FDA considers expanded use of HPV vaccine

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Pharmaceutical manufacturer Merck & Co. Inc. said the U.S. Food and Drug Administration will consider expanding the use of its cervical cancer vaccine.

Merck said the FDA has agreed to conduct a priority review of Merck's application to expand the current approved usage of Gardasil -- a vaccine used to prevent infection by the human papillomavirus, or HPV -- from children and women ages 9-26 to women ages 27 through 45.

The pharmaceutical company said Gardasil is used to prevent cervical cancer, precancerous or dysplastic lesions and genital warts caused by HPV.

Gardasil, sold in some countries as Silgard, has been approved in 100 nations, including the United States, the European Union, Mexico, Australia, Taiwan, Canada, New Zealand and Brazil, Merck said.