

Vaccine panel gives nod to HPV shots for men up to age 26

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Electron micrograph of a negatively stained human papilloma virus (HPV) which occurs in human warts. Credit: public domain

A vaccine against cervical and other cancers should be recommended for both men and women up to age 26, a U.S. government advisory panel decided Wednesday.

The [vaccine](#) protects against HPV, a virus that is commonly spread through sex and can cause certain cancers and [genital warts](#).

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' vote in Atlanta raises the recommended vaccination age for men from 21 to 26, making it the same as the existing recommendation for women. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention almost always accepts the panel's recommendations and uses them as guidance for U.S. doctors.

The HPV vaccine is usually given to 11- and 12-year olds, to protect them before their first exposure to sexually transmitted viruses.

Women as old as 26 had been recommended to get a "catch-up" vaccination if they missed the shots in pre-adolescence. For men, the catch-up recommendation had applied only up to age 21, because research indicates males tend to be exposed to sexually-transmitted viruses earlier.

The panel decided Wednesday to equalize the age recommendations to make it easier for doctors.

The CDC estimates that roughly half of Americans ages 18 to 59 had some form of genital HPV. Vaccinations against it first became available in 2006 and each dose now costs \$216.

The vaccine is approved for people up to age 45, but the same panel declined a proposal to recommend it for people older than 26.

Instead, it settled on a weak endorsement for adults between 26 and age 45, meaning patients and doctors can make the decision together.

It's not clear how many cancers would be prevented in that age group or whether the cost is worth the public health benefit, experts at the

meeting said.

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