

HPV vaccine associated with improved fertility in some women

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Gardasil vaccine and box. Image: Wikipedia

More than 40 percent of American teens are now getting vaccinated against human papillomavirus (HPV). But, despite HPV infection being associated with reduced semen quality and lower pregnancy rates, there is still public concern about whether the HPV vaccine itself could affect future fertility.

Now, the first prospective cohort examining the relationship between HPV vaccination and fertility, led by a Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) researcher, has found that the vaccine can actually improve chances of conception in some women.

The study, published in the journal *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology*, shows little overall association between HPV vaccination and the chances of conceiving for men and women—except among women with a history of [sexually transmitted infections](#) (STIs). STIs are associated with lower fertility, but vaccinated women with an STI history had about the same chance of

becoming pregnant as unvaccinated women who had never had an STI.

"Our study found no adverse effects of HPV vaccination on fertility and indicated that it may, in fact, protect fertility among individuals who have had other STIs," says BUSPH doctoral student Kathryn McInerney, the study's lead author. "Our study should reassure those who are hesitant to vaccinate due to [fertility concerns](#)."

The study used data from the Pregnancy Study Online (PRESTO), a preconception cohort of North American pregnancy planners. The ongoing study enrolled 3,483 women and 1,022 men aged 21 to 45 years who were actively trying to conceive. Couples were followed for 12 months or until pregnancy, whichever came first. At enrollment, 33.9 percent of women had been vaccinated against HPV, compared to 5.2 percent of men.

"Internationally, parents have chosen not to vaccinate their children due to concerns about the vaccine's effect on future fertility," McInerney says. "We hope this study will be useful for health providers who counsel individuals and families about HPV vaccination."

Provided by Boston University School of Medicine

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