

# STANDARD DEVIATIONS: Venereal Disease

Very well, STD,

We used to use the term venereal, but you don't see it much anymore. The word, that is. Because we sure see a bunch of STD.

**ve·ne·re·al dis·ease** [və' nīrēəl də' zēz]

NOUN

1. a disease typically contracted by sexual contact with a person already infected; a sexually transmitted disease.

"gonorrhoea is the commonest venereal disease"

**STD** [ˌes ˌtē ˈdē]

NOUN

1. a sexually transmitted disease.

"gonorrhoea is the commonest STD"

(both from Oxford Dictionary.com)

I like the first better; maybe I'm old-school. But the sample usage sentence is wrong; **by a long shot**.

**HPV, Human Papillomavirus**, is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States.

According to the CDC, approximately 20 million Americans are currently infected with HPV and most sexually active persons become infected with HPV at least once in their lifetime.

Most infections resolve as transient, asymptomatic events. Unfortunately, some types lead to different, harsher outcomes.

Over 100 types of HPV have been identified, 40 of which infect the genital area, throat, and mouth. HPV types are classified by their association with cancer. Non-oncogenic (low risk) HPV types, such as HPV 6 and 11 may cause 1) benign or low-grade cervical cell abnormalities, 2) genital warts, and 3) RRP, a respiratory tract disease. Oncogenic (high-risk) HPV types, including types 16 and 18, may cause cervical, vulvar, vaginal, penile, anal, and oropharyngeal (back of throat) cancers.



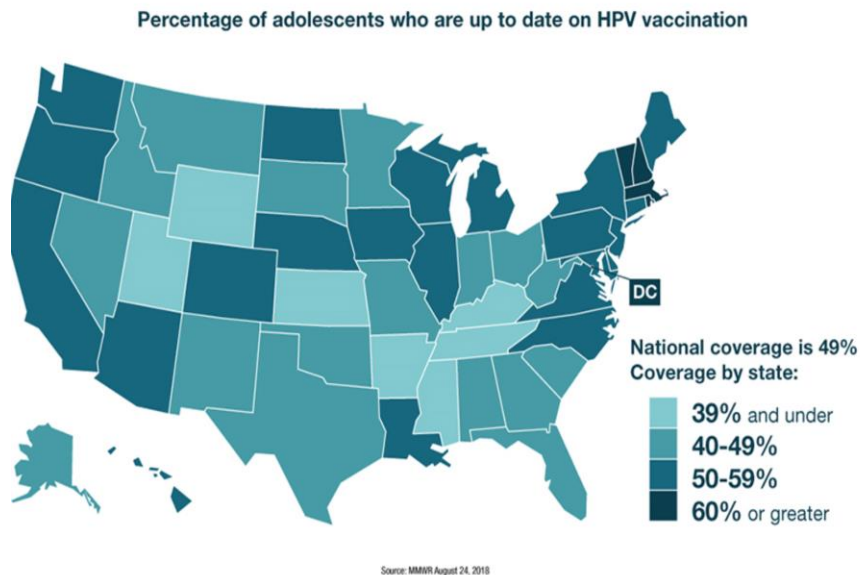
There are several HPV vaccines licensed in the United States. Here's the gist: a bivalent vaccine (Cervarix) that prevents infection with HPV types 16 and 18, is good against most cervical cancer types. A quadrivalent vaccine (Gardasil) that prevents infection with HPV types 6, 11, 16, and 18, targets those cervical cancers and genital warts. And a 9-valent vaccine that prevents infection with HPV types 6, 11, 16, and 18, 31, 33, 45, 52, and 58, gives coverage to both cancers and most remaining cervical cancer types

All HPV vaccines are administered as a 3-dose series of IM injections over a 6-month period, with the second and third doses given 1–2 and 6 months after the first dose, respectively.

We know the exact number of measles cases because of its status as a national reportable disease. We estimate HPV, not because it's reportable (it isn't), but with a certainty borne out by sheer numbers.

Why isn't HPV a national reportable disease? Two answers: 1) it's so ubiquitous and transient that monitoring is too sketchy, and 2) we can vaccinate but not cure. Sure, it's a public health threat, but these details keep it (and herpes virus) off the list.

Why isn't HPV vaccination a bigger story than the MMR? A small fraction of susceptible Americans is the focus of a huge media blitz re measles. Thousands of Americans WILL develop preventable cancers and millions will contract HPV. When's the last time you saw it in the news?



A small number of non-vaxers cite a de-bunked theory of autism related to the MMR. A huge swath of zealots cites a de-bunked theory of sexual promiscuity related to HPV vaccines.

I began this week with an idea to explain/argue measles vaccine. And that issue is certainly newsworthy (in the rest of the world, where measles is affecting tens of thousands!) Our public health awareness of measles (>95% vaccinated) isn't the story we need to hear; it's simply the disease du jour. The 971 documented case count (6-1) means that the US is no longer free of this disease, **but, >33,000 cancers due to HPV occur across America every year.** We understand and implement a fantastic vaccination program for measles with tiny pockets of unvaccinated children; HPV deserves the same attention and focus of our health care system. Sometimes we allow media (social and journalistic) to direct our attention. In those instances, we lose sight of our mission. We must rely on our understanding of disease, risk, and community service to maintain and facilitate public health.

Have a great week and be safe,

Bryan

