HPV Vaccine May Benefit Women With HIV

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HIV-positive women may benefit from the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, in particular the more than 45 percent of young women who haven't been exposed to the higher-risk types of the virus.

In a National Institutes of Health study of 99 HIV-positive women between the ages of 16 and 23, published in the Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes, researchers found that three quarters of the women were infected with at least one type of HPV. However, when they looked at the two high-risk forms of the virus that cause 70 percent of cervical cancers, only a respective 12 and 5 percent of the study group were infected.

"The findings suggest that vaccinating even sexually active HIV-positive women could prevent cervical cancer," said the study's lead author, Jessica A. Kahn, MD, MPH, a professor of pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine.

As for the three-shot vaccine's $400 price tag (which doesn't include the cost of office visits), public insurance programs tend to reimburse for females up to age 18, and private insurers to age 26. However, some health providers do partner with the vaccine manufacturer to provide the shots for free.

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