

Canada's first hospital-based HPV vaccine clinic opens at Sunnybrook

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The first HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) Vaccine Clinic based in a Canadian hospital has opened its doors. The Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre clinic is located at 76 Grenville Street, and will provide vaccinations, education and counseling for women in order to help reduce the spread of the sexually transmitted HPV infection and ultimately the possible onset of cervical cancer.

"Three out of four Canadians will have at least one HPV infection in their lifetime. Our goal is to reach the young women who need the vaccine, Gardasil™, most and let them know that this service is available," says Dr. Nancy Durand, gynaecologist at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. "Services at the clinic go beyond vaccination. We also offer counselling services by knowledgeable nurse practitioners, who can educate women on HPV and what the virus can possibly lead to."

HPV is the primary cause of cervical cancer and is also linked to vaginal, vulvar and anal cancers. With routine Pap smears, condom use and HPV vaccination, women can decrease risk of cervical cancer by 70 per cent and genital warts by 90 per cent.

"Ensuring access to the vaccine is really key," says Dr. Jennifer Blake, Chief of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. "So many young women in Toronto don't have a family physician, or are attending university away from home. The HPV vaccine clinic provides counseling and vaccination to young women in a warm and friendly environment."

The vaccine is not currently covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). Some private insurance companies cover the cost of the vaccine. Gardasil™ is given in three doses over six months and each dose will cost \$160.00 when given in the clinic.

Dr. Durand explains that vaccination can save women from treatment for HPV infection, pre-cancerous cells and genital warts, which can involve burning the affected area with acid or by laser, freezing with liquid nitrogen or surgical removal. "A patient I just saw told me she is planning to give her two nieces a gift of Gardasil™ vaccination so they don't have to go through what she has," says Dr. Durand.

The clinic, staffed by Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre Nurse Practitioners, is located on the 5th floor of 76 Grenville Street (at Women's College Hospital). It is open on Wednesday afternoons from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. To schedule an appointment for vaccination, call 416.323.6253.

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