

Appendix A

General information

HPV and cervical cancer

Cervical cancer is a life-threatening disease among women. It is caused by the Human Pappilomavirus (HPV). HPV is contagious and is spread through sex: through contact with infected genital skin, mucous membranes, or bodily fluids. Both men and women can get infected with HPV. Not only the penis and vagina are infected; HPV can infect skin not normally covered by a condom (such as hands or mouth), so using a condom does not fully protect someone from the virus. Also, many people don't realize they're infected with HPV and may have no symptoms. The virus can be cleared by one's immune system, but sometimes, this does not happen. Then, the virus can lead to precursors of cervical cancer –and eventually to cervical cancer.

The HPV-vaccination

Since 1976, there has been a cervical cancer screening program. Thanks to this program, precursors of cervical cancer can be detected early, so that cervical cancer can be prevented or treated at an early stage of the disease. In order to prevent (rather than detect) cervical cancer, the HPV-vaccination has been available since 2010. Every year, 12 year old girls are invited via the National Immunization Program. The HPV-vaccination consists of three injections*, given in a period of half a year. The HPV-vaccination is offered on a voluntary basis and free of charge. The HPV-vaccination prevents infection with the HPV-virus (2 types of the virus, that cause 70% of infections) and protects against cervical cancer. The HPV-vaccination is also called 'the vaccination against cervical cancer'. The HPV-vaccination has been approved for girls between 9 and 26 years old, but it is best to vaccinate girls at an early age, before she gets sexually active and therefore is at risk for getting infected. The HPV-vaccination has been tested and

results showed it was safe. As with most vaccinations, the spot of injection can be a bit painful, red and swollen for a while.

There is no treatment if you are infected with HPV. The HPV-vaccination is therefore the only available and effective method to protect against an infection with HPV

Note: The original language of the narrative information was Dutch. *When the experiment was conducted, the HPV-vaccination still consisted of three instead of two injections.

Appendix B

Statistical risk information

The risk of getting HPV and cervical cancer

In the Netherlands, every year, about 600 Dutch women are diagnosed with cervical cancer.

Approximately 200 of these women die of this disease per year. This means that almost every day, a woman dies of cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is caused by infection with the HPV-virus. The HPV-virus is highly prevalent. Almost everybody who is sexually active, is exposed to the virus. Of every 100 women, 80 get infected with the HPV-virus. This means that 80% of all women get infected with HPV at least once. However, not all women get cervical cancer. It cannot be predicted who gets cervical cancer and who doesn't, but it is always caused by being infected with HPV. Therefore, it is important to prevent a HPV-infection.

Protecting against HPV

It is expected that, in the Netherlands, the HPV-vaccination will prevent half of the cervical cancer cases. This means that the HPV-vaccination can decrease the amount of women getting cervical cancer with 50%. So, when no girl gets the HPV-vaccination, 600 women per year will get cervical cancer. However, when all girls get the HPV-vaccination, 300 women per year (half of 600) will be saved from getting cervical cancer.

In conclusion: girls who do get the HPV-vaccination, have a much smaller chance of getting cervical cancer later in life than girls who don't get the HPV-vaccination.

Note: The original language of the statistical information was Dutch

Appendix C

Narrative risk information

By Anne, 30 years of age

Hi everybody. I found this forum via a friend and I would like to share my story with you all. When I was 14 years old, I had my first boyfriend, with whom I had sex for the first time when I was 16. Since then, I have had two relationships: one when I was 21 (lasted 2 years) and my current relationship with Robbert (already lasting 4 years now). I've only had a few casual sex partners in my life; I never was that 'wild'. Aside from a drunk slip-up, I've always used a condom with casual partners. I wouldn't want to get an STI!

Last year, we went skiing with a couple of friends. Just after our arrival, I noticed that I lost some blood. Somewhat concerned, I called a family member who also is a doctor. 'Could it be that you're pregnant?' he asked me. Robbert and I agreed that we were ready having a baby, so it was possible. We got the advice to enjoy our vacation and that I should have it checked out when I was back home. Once I was back home, I got my period and because we immediately were sucked into our busy but carefree lives, I kind of already had forgotten about what happened during our vacation. Until, about a month ago, I again had some blood loss while it wasn't the time to have my period. I arranged an appointment with my doctor that afternoon. After a short examination, I was sent to the hospital for further tests.

Turned out.. I have cervical cancer! The doctor told me that the cancer had been caused by the HPV-virus. I've had heard of it, but didn't know much about it. But I had been so careful? Could it be one of those very few times I have had unsafe sex? Could have been, but the doctor told me that I could have gotten infected with HPV during safe sex as well. It therefore was quite difficult to find out who got me infected. I'd never thought that I would get infected with HPV, let alone that it would develop into cervical cancer..

With the HPV-vaccination that is available now, I sometimes can't help but wonder: 'what if I had gotten myself vaccinated against HPV 18 years ago...'

Note: The original language of the narrative information was Dutch