

## **Should Your Daughter Get the Gardasil Vaccine? Questions Every Mother Should Ask**

When it comes to deciding whether or not your daughter should get the Gardasil vaccine, OB/GYN Dr. Suzanne Gilberg-Lenz says each family needs to make their own personal risk-benefit assessment, like we do a thousand times a day without thinking about it. (For instance, we might think: Is it safer to walk to school and cross busy streets or take the bus or drive in a car, etc.? Use the same sort of decision-making process here.) Do the benefits outweigh the risk for your daughter?

Here are questions that Dr. Gilberg-Lenz recommends you ask yourself:

- How old is your daughter?
- Is she in a higher risk group with regards to early sexual behaviors, access to drugs and alcohol, and parental supervision?
- Do you talk openly about sex in your household, community, or school?
- Is your child receiving realistic, non-judgmental information on sexual development, health, and reproductive choices?
- Does your daughter know where to get a condom, how to use it, and will she demand it be worn at all times?

If she is in a higher risk group, or you do not talk openly about sex in your household, she is likely someone who could benefit more from the vaccine. Arm yourself with the facts and talk with your kids before making your decision.

### **Teachable moment**

Dr. Gilberg-Lenz says deciding whether or not to have your child vaccinated provides a great opportunity for parents to talk to teens about HPV, STDs, and keeping themselves healthy.

### **But is Gardasil safe?**

Dr. Suzanne says that Gardasil is probably safe for most, but the jury is still out. "The issue in my opinion is allowing moms, parents, and teens to make educated, not fear-based, decisions," she concludes.