

### Links to the Closing The Gap program

If you are eligible to join a special program called **Closing the Gap** this will allow special access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) with associated access to cheaper medications. Patients who are eligible are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin; and have an existing chronic disease or are at risk of a chronic disease such as diabetes.

Only GPs working in specific practices are able to provide these scripts. So you will need to check with your GP first.

Although **GARDASIL** costs are not currently covered by the PBS this program may bring down the cost of your other medications.



### References

1. The Cancer Council Australia, March 2008, *Best practice in cervical cancer immunisation-report of a roundtable discussion about the impact of the Human Papilloma Virus vaccine in Australia. Discussions and recommendations*, Sydney, pp. 19.

2. The Cancer Council Queensland, July 2007, *Human Papilloma Virus-Information sheet*. Fortitude Valley.

3. Government of Western Australia Department of Health, 2008, *Why Aboriginal women should have regular PAP smears*, Perth.

4. Merck Sharp & Dohme (Australia) Pty, October 2010, *Gardasil -Product Information*, South Granville NSW.

5. National Prescribing Service, 2011, *Be medicines wise*, Strawberry Hills, NSW, Viewed 14 July 2011, <<http://www.nps.org.au/bemedicinewise>>

6. Roy Morgan Research, June 2010, *Image of professions survey 2010*, Brisbane, Viewed 14 July 2011, <<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/>polls/2010/4518/>>.

7. *Australian Indigenous Images* Vol.1, 1999, CD, Doddy Worx.

### Acknowledgements:

(for provision of expert comment)  
Yulu-Burri-Ba Aboriginal Corporation for  
Community Health & Doctorz on Bennetts  
General Practice (Norman Park)



Australian Government



## Cervical Screening & Quality Use of Medicines

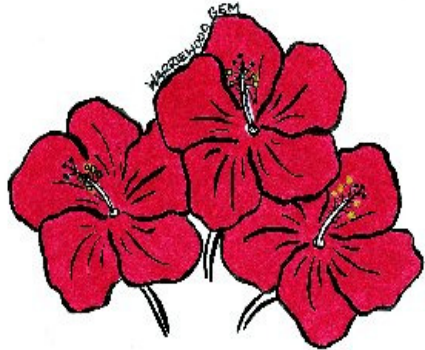
**Do you want to be more proactive in your own sexual health care?**

**How can you be better protected against cervical cancer?**

**How can your community health service, local GP or pharmacist guide you?**



## Aboriginal women for cervical prevention



### Cervical cancer –why the concern?

Aboriginal women have higher rates of cervical cancer.

More Aboriginal women die from cervical cancer than other women in Australia.

There is greater risk for Aboriginal women in rural and remote areas.

### Cervical screening testing

PAP smear is the main test for detection of cervical Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) infection. The PAP smear is a simple test to screen women for HPV. It will also find any changes in the cells of the cervix. These changes are linked to cervical cancer.

*Overall for all Australian women there is a 62-68% participation rate in this screening. However in one survey participation rate for Aboriginal women in rural and remote areas was only 41% (Qld). PAP smear participation rates overall are lower for Aboriginal women.*

*There is limited information, but rates of HPV infection for Aboriginal women appear about the same as for non-Indigenous women suggesting that high cancer rates are due to poor access to primary health care .(1) Therefore Aboriginal women are underscreened.*

### Prevention

Two vaccines are now available in Australia that protect against the two types of HPV most commonly linked to cervical cancer. These vaccines do not treat existing infections, they can only prevent infection. They prevent about 70 per cent of the infections that cause cervical cancer, but are not a substitute for PAP smears. (2)

A national immunisation program has been introduced for HPV. *GARDASIL* is administered as a series of three injections over a period of seven months. A target group has been schools to ensure that girls do not miss out and to make this costly vaccine more accessible. An immunisation program needs to run over a whole school year. Make sure you or your daughters have three injections.

### More on PAP smears

- **Should women still have regular PAP tests?**

Yes. All women who have ever had sex need to continue having **two-yearly PAP tests**. Even if you no longer have periods or have not been sexually active for a long time you still need to have a PAP smear. Regular PAP testing is highly effective at preventing cervical cancer. Have a PAP smear every two years until you are 70. Even if you have had a hysterectomy you may need to have a PAP smear. (3)

Young girls who are vaccinated will still need to have PAP tests when they're older. This is because the vaccine does not protect against all types of cancer causing HPV. As mentioned earlier it is effective against two specific types of HPV that cause up to 70 per cent of cervical cancers.

- **Abnormal results**

Your GP should have special systems set up to ensure you are contacted if your result is unusual. **However it is important to follow up on your own result.** It is important to remember that almost all abnormal PAP smear results are not due to cancer as one in every ten PAP smears show cell changes. (3)

- **How to I access a Pap test?**

Some women feel shame about having a PAP smear. Call your GP, nurse or Aboriginal Health worker to make a simple appointment **with the person who makes you feel most comfortable.** If you need a support person to join you that is fine. You have full control over what happens during the appointment. **Please be sure to follow up on your result.**



### Quality Use of Medicines-the vaccine

As for any vaccine, vaccination with *GARDASIL* may not result in protection in all who have the needle.

Syncope (fainting) may follow any vaccination, especially in adolescents and young adults. Therefore, you should be carefully observed for approximately 15 minutes after administration of *GARDASIL*.

As with all injectable vaccines, appropriate medical treatment should always be readily available in case of rare unexpected reactions following the administration of the vaccine. (4)

### The role of your pharmacy

In a recent public survey (done on 672 people) pharmacists rated as the 2nd most ethical and honest profession (just behind nurses) .(6) They are often the first person you ask when you have a concern with your health.

For other considerations related to the vaccine your pharmacist can provide you with a information sheet called a **Consumers Medicines Information (CMI)** sheet that will help to explain things like side effects.

This is an important role of your pharmacist as they specialise in medicines information that is relevant to your health.



Whenever you are taking a medicine you need to be "Medicines Wise"and ask- (5)

- What is the medicine for?
- What is the active ingredient?
- How do I take or use this medicine correctly?
- What are the possible side effects and what can I do about them?
- What should or shouldn't I do while taking this medicine?