



# daily bedpost

sex on the brain with em & lo,  
dr. kate and distracted  
minds everywhere

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- Found
- Horoscopes
- Interviews
- Movies
- News
- Roundup
- Stuff
- TV
- The Doctor Is In
- Who Would You Do

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- Em & Lo
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DIRT 03.20.2008 by em & lo

## College Confessional: A Case for Gardasil



*The Daily Bedpost's recent rant on new STDs stats, the safer sex Q&A with Dr. Kate, and the Gardasil poll spurred our awesome intern Ariel Servadio to make this very personal case for the HPV vaccine:*

I'm not a spokesperson for Gardasil. I am, however, the daughter of a woman who has HPV, and has lost her ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus and cervix because of it.

My mother--who as far as I'm concerned only had sex for procreation purposes--found out she had HPV in 1990 after an abnormal pap smear. She suffered from genital warts on her cervix for many years and had several painful laser surgeries to remove them. And when they returned in precancerous form, she had a portion of her cervix removed...

It didn't end there, though. Since she was close to menopause, she didn't think twice when she stopped getting her period. But menopause wasn't the culprit: the consequences of HPV were. After enduring years of trauma, her cervix completely closed up, so as she continued to menstruate her uterus began filling up with blood, unbeknownst to her. By the time she discovered a hard ball the size of a grapefruit in her lower abdomen, she had to have a hasty full hysterectomy. Pathology results revealed that cancer cells were inside her cervix.

My mom's okay now, and for that I am eternally grateful. But she still went through a hell of a lot of pain and suffering that never would have happened if she didn't have HPV.

Now I'll be the first to admit that Gardasil is not



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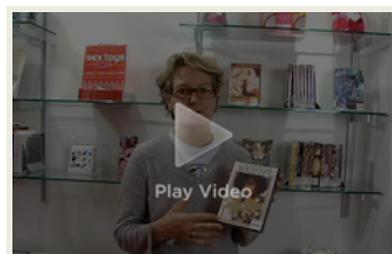
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perfect: it's not a cervical cancer vaccine, and perhaps it's unfair to market it as such (you can still get cervical cancer, even if you don't have HPV). And this vaccine doesn't prevent you from getting all of the many strains of HPV, it only protects you from four of them. Gardasil is also really expensive, especially if your insurance doesn't cover it (or if you don't have insurance). And it's currently unclear whether or not it lasts for more than five years, or what its long-term effects are.

However, in my mind, none of these are reason enough to give the HPV vaccine the brush off. It protects you from two common strains of HPV that cause genital warts and two other subclinical (or seemingly invisible) strains that are responsible for 70 percent of cervical cancer cases. Gardasil might save your life, or at least your cervix, if you're a woman; and if you're a man, should it be approved for men, then it might prevent you from spreading a silent killer.

Had Gardasil been around when my mother was younger, it may not have prevented any or all of this. But then again, it very well may have. And the chance, however small, to keep my mom--my best friend--from going through all that, whatever the side-effects, would have been totally worth it to me.

--[Ariel Servadio](#)

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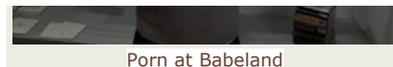
**said:**

I was diagnosed with genital warts as a grad student in 1991, a lasting reminder of my law student boyfriend. The male doctor who removed them treated me like I was a prostitute. I will never forget the humiliation of that day. HPV was never mentioned, nor was the increased risk of cervical cancer.

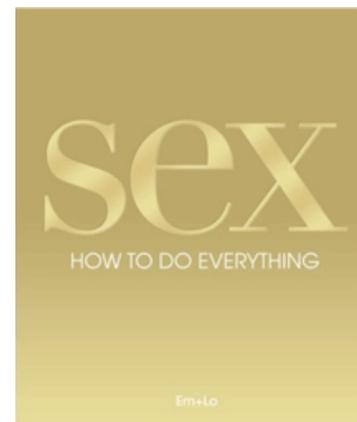
Five years later, at the age of 27, I was diagnosed with cervical cancer and told I had to have a hysterectomy--the standard treatment for cervical cancer. After pleading with my doctors, I was able to convince them to perform a cervical conization instead, removing most, but not all, of my cervix with the understanding that I had to be tested for cervical cancer quarterly due to the high risk of re-infection.

I moved out of state a couple years later and had a very difficult time finding a new ob/gyn. No one wanted to accept me as a patient since I had refused a hysterectomy, even though my subsequent pap tests were all negative. I went to 5 doctors before finding one who would treat me without insisting on a hysterectomy.

10 years after my cancer surgery, I finally agreed to a hysterectomy after being diagnosed with fibroid tumors in my uterus. Not one test during that 10-year period



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## about em & lo

Em & Lo, more formally known as Emma Taylor and Lorelei Sharkey, are the self-proclaimed Emily Posts of the modern bedroom. [more >>](#)



about  
dr. kate

Dr. Kate is an OB/GYN at one of the largest teaching hospitals in New York City. [more >>](#)

Check out Daily Bedpost on [MySpace.com](#).

was positive for cancer, but the emotional turmoil surrounding the quarterly testing was extreme.

If this vaccine can help keep other women from having to undergo an experience like mine, it's worth its weight in gold. If you are considering the vaccine, stop considering, and make the appointment. NOW.

March 24, 2008 11:20 PM

**said:**

I teach various sexuality classes and those that aren't sexuality related, I still stealthy add it to my syllbus. THis being one of the main reasons why. Thank you for your candor Ariel, I'm sure your mother is proud to have a "sexpert" as a daughter.

April 4, 2008 9:50 PM

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