In a recent Adventist Review article you talked about the new human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine. How much at risk are we as Adventists, because surely we have better statistics than the general public.

When the recommendation to offer immunization to all young women of about 14 years old was made, data of the HPV prevalence was used. That data, taken from the 2003-04 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, found about 27 percent of women had tested positive for the infection. Some 37 types of HPV were identified. In 20- to 24-year-old women, about 45 percent were infected. This prevalence declined to 20 percent in women ages 50 to 59.

The vaccine targets only four types of HPV, numbered types 6, 11, 16, and 18, which are associated with cervical cancer. The total rates of infection for these four is about 3.4 percent.

Among women reporting never to have had intercourse, the overall infection rate is 5 percent for all HPV types.

Adventist young women may be at lower risk, but studies on Adventists have shown a significant gap between our “creed” and our “deed.”

It is indeed important to create loving protective relationships with our children, but the risk of the vaccine is so low and its protection so important, we are of the opinion: “better safe than sorry.”

That being said, everyone has freedom of choice, and a good, clean, Christian lifestyle is the best protection from all these types of infection.

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While this column is provided as a service to our readers, Drs. Landless and Handysides unfortunately cannot enter into personal and private communication with our readers. We recommend that you consult with your personal physician on all matters of your health.