



You probably know someone who has suffered from a disease caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Maybe a relative who developed cervical cancer? A friend who got cancer at the base of the tongue or tonsils even though he never smoked? HPV can cause these cancers, but vaccination can prevent infection from many of the cancer-causing types of HPV.

*Almost everyone will be infected with HPV at some point in their lives.*

## Changing the Future: Preventing HPV Cancers

*By ensuring that patients 11 or 12 years old get the HPV vaccine, we can give them a chance at a future free from HPV cancers.*

What is the most important thing I can say to be sure our patients get vaccinated?

Recommendations for the HPV vaccine should be delivered in the same way as other adolescent vaccines.

- > **DO:** Recommend HPV vaccine on the same day and in the same way as other adolescent vaccines so it's clear that the vaccines are equally important. When handing a parent the required Vaccine Information Statements (VIS), say something like: *"Today your child is due for three vaccines: Tdap, HPV, and Meningococcal."*
- > **DON'T:** Make the HPV vaccine sound different or optional. For example, if a health care worker says, "Today your child needs two vaccines, Tdap and meningococcal. There's also HPV vaccine if you want it," it sounds like HPV vaccine is optional. That is not the message you want to send to families.

How can our office increase the number of patients who are vaccinated?

Here are some examples of strategies that work.

- > **Reminder or recall systems:** Use phone, mail, e-mail, text, or a patient portal to remind patients to come in or to recall them after a missed appointment (see <https://www.aap.org/ReminderRecallSystems>).
- > **Provider Prompts:** Use the electronic medical record, a paper note, or a nurse message to remind providers to order vaccines the patient needs.
- > **Standing Orders:** These written protocols can be used to increase adolescent vaccine rates (see <http://www.immunize.org/standing-orders/>).
- > **Return Visits:** Make every effort to ensure that patients schedule their visit for the next dose of HPV vaccination before they leave the office.

What should I do if a parent declines HPV vaccine?

Here are some strategies for talking to parents.

- > Ask in a nonconfrontational way, "Could you share your concerns about getting your child vaccinated today?"
- > In some offices, it may be preferable to refer the concern to the physician. You can say something like, "In this office we are huge advocates for this vaccine because it prevents cancer, so I'm sure the physician will want to talk about it with you."
- > Avoid closing the conversation on HPV vaccination without giving the physician a chance to make a strong recommendation.
- > Talk through your team's plan so everyone is aware of their role in communication.

## Be ready to answer parents' questions accurately and succinctly.

Some parents may need more information from you, the practice staff they know and trust. By taking a little time to understand and address their questions you can help parents to accept HPV vaccine.

To help you with these conversations, print out some fact sheets that explain HPV and HPV vaccination (available here): [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/diseases/teen/hpv-indepth-color.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/diseases/teen/hpv-indepth-color.pdf)

### *Below are some things that parents might say and tips on how to respond:*

#### **Important**

##### **I don't think it's necessary. My child's not at risk for HPV.**

HPV is so common that almost everyone will be infected at some time in their lives. We can help protect your child from the cancers caused by the virus by starting the HPV vaccine series today.

##### **Why is HPV vaccination recommended at ages 11 or 12?**

The immune system of a young adolescent responds better to the vaccine. When given at ages 11 or 12 your child will only need two doses instead of three.

##### **Would you get HPV vaccine for your kids?**

Absolutely! I made sure my children [or grandchildren, etc.] were vaccinated on time because I want to do everything I can to protect them from HPV cancers.

#### **Effective**

##### **How do you know if the vaccine works?**

Ongoing studies show that HPV vaccination works very well. Since becoming available in 2006, this vaccine already has decreased HPV infection, genital warts, and precancers of the cervix in young people.

##### **Why do boys need HPV vaccine?**

In men, HPV infection can cause cancers of the penis, anus, and back of the throat. By vaccinating your son today he will be better protected against the HPV types that can cause these diseases.

#### **Safe**

##### **Do you think the HPV vaccination is safe? Why?**

I believe the HPV vaccine is very safe. It was tested in thousands of volunteers and studied for more than ten years by medical and scientific experts before it was approved for use.

##### **What are the possible vaccine side effects?**

HPV vaccine, like any vaccine, can cause injection site pain, swelling, or redness. Some adolescents may have a headache or even faint after they get shots. We take fainting seriously because kids could be injured if they fall, so we'll have your child stay seated for a while after the shot.

##### **Will my child see the HPV vaccine as a green light to have sex?**

Studies have shown that getting the HPV vaccine does not make kids more likely to have sex or start having sex at a younger age.