



As a parent, you may have questions about vaccines for your pre-teen. Below is the information you need from pediatricians to be confident about your decision to vaccinate.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

Why is HPV vaccine given at age 11-12?

- Early vaccination prevents substantially more pre-cancer than late vaccination.
- Current evidence shows that HPV vaccination does not wear off!
- HPV vaccine only works if the series is complete before a person is infected. Almost no 11-12 year-olds have HPV.
- Every visit after the age of 9 is an opportunity to provide the vaccination to adolescents.
- After receiving HPV vaccine pre-teens make more infection fighting antibodies than older teens. That is why only 2 doses of the vaccine are recommended at this age, instead of 3.

Is it likely my teen will be exposed to HPV?

- HPV is very common and easily spread.
- HPV is spread by intimate skin-to-skin contact, not just sex.
- Even if someone waits until marriage to have sex, or only has one partner in the future, he/she could still be exposed.
- Approximately 79 million persons are infected with HPV and about 14 million new HPV infections occur each year. Half of these new infections (7 million per year) occur in persons 15-24 years.

Why do boys and girls need HPV vaccine if it protects against cervical cancer?

- HPV can cause several types of cancers and genital warts in both males and females.
- It can lead to cancers of the:
 - Back of the throat, base of the tongue, and tonsils (in males and females)
 - Anus (in males and females)
 - Cervix, vulva, and vagina (in females)
 - Penis (in males)
- *All of these cancers can be deadly.*
- Getting the vaccine can help prevent HPV infections that cause those cancers.
- HPV vaccine also prevents genital warts.
- Women can get cervical cancer screening, but there is no similar test for head and neck cancers in men.
- A male who receives HPV vaccine is also protecting his future partner. When the male is vaccinated, he does not spread the virus that causes cervical and other cancers.



All Pre-teen Vaccines

Are adolescent vaccines safe? Do they have side effects? Can they be given at 'sick visits'?

All vaccines routinely recommended for pre-teens have been licensed by the Food and Drug Administration and found to be safe. The safety of each vaccine continues to be checked after it is licensed. Your pediatrician can provide you with a Vaccine Information Statement that explains the mild side effects that can occur after receiving shots: pain and fainting. Detailed [safety information](#) is available along with [additional resources](#).

Pain: Pediatricians do not like to cause discomfort to children of any age. Even though shots may hurt, getting a vaccine is not as bad as suffering from a serious disease such as meningitis or cancer. Talk with your pediatrician about ways to reduce pain during vaccination. Stroking the skin or applying pressure to the skin before the shot reduces the pain. In some offices, medication to numb the skin may be available.

Fainting: Your pediatrician may ask your child to sit for 15 minutes after getting a shot in case your child faints (syncope). Staying seated for 15 minutes reduces the main risk from fainting, ie, getting hurt from falling.

Vaccination at 'sick visits': Families are busy and it is hard to find time to visit the pediatrician's office to get a shot. It is smart to get any vaccines that are due when your child is in the pediatrician's office for any reason. This will reduce the chance that your child will miss school, work, or other activities to receive vaccines.

Why is more than one dose of vaccine needed?

HPV vaccine: It is recommended that your child receive 2 doses of HPV vaccine at ages 11-12 for full protection. If your child starts the series when 15 or older or has certain immune problems, he/she may need 3 doses of the HPV vaccine for the body to build up enough immunity to protect against infection. Many of the vaccines that babies get also require three doses.

Meningococcal vaccine: One dose of meningococcal vaccine protects a person, but immunity may decrease over time. A booster dose can "boost" immunity so that your child is still fully protected. Pre-teens should receive meningococcal vaccine to be fully protected for a few years and another dose at age 16 to boost immunity.

Tdap: Recently, there have been several outbreaks of pertussis (whooping cough) throughout the U.S. This is due, in part, to decreasing immunity. Currently only one dose of Tdap is recommended, but booster doses of pertussis vaccine (in Tdap) may be recommended in the future. Studies are underway to determine if and when booster doses will be needed.

What is the cost of these vaccines? I'm not sure if my insurance will cover them.

Pediatricians realize that healthcare can be costly for families. If your child does not have health insurance, has Medicaid or insurance that does not cover vaccines, or is American Indian or Alaskan Native, he/she qualifies to receive vaccines at no cost through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. Most pediatricians provide VFC vaccines. If your pediatrician is not a VFC provider, your child should be able to receive vaccines at your local health department. Speak with your child's pediatrician to learn more about the [VFC program](#) or contact your [VFC state, city or territory coordinator](#).