

## Get your child vaccinated against HPV!\*

### Why does my child need the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine protects against cancers caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a very common virus; nearly 80 million people in the United States—about 1 in 4—are infected by it. About 14 million people, including teens, are newly infected with HPV each year. HPV can cause cancer of the cervix, vagina, or vulva in women; cancer of the penis in men; and cancer of the anus or the back of the throat in both women and men.

### When should my child be vaccinated?

Your daughter or son should get the HPV vaccine at age 11 or 12. The vaccine is given in three shots. The second shot is given 1 or 2 months after the first shot. The third shot is given 6 months after the first shot.

### Why is the HPV vaccine recommended at such a young age?

For the vaccine to be effective, it should be given before a person is exposed to HPV. Exposure to this virus occurs with sexual activity with another person. Most people first engage in sex in their teenage or young adult years. Therefore, it is best to start the vaccination series early—before a person has sex and could potentially be exposed to HPV. Also, the HPV vaccine produces a stronger immune response in preteens than it does in older teens and young adults.

### Who else should get the HPV vaccine?

Teen girls and boys who did not start or finish the HPV vaccine series when they were younger should get it now. Young women can get the HPV vaccine through age 26, and young men can get it through age 21. Men between the ages of 21 and 26 who have sex with men and/or who have poor immune systems (including those with HIV infection) can get the HPV vaccine if they did not get it when they were younger.

### Is the vaccine still effective if a young person has had sex?

Yes. Even though HPV infection usually happens soon after someone has sex for the first time, a person might not be exposed to any or all of the HPV types that are in the vaccine. Females and males in the age groups recommended for vaccination are likely to get at least some protection from the vaccine.

### How well does the HPV vaccine work?

Very well! Clinical trials have shown that the vaccines provide close to 100% protection against pre-cancers and genital warts caused by HPV.

### How long will the HPV vaccine provide protection?

Studies show that the vaccine offers protection against HPV infection and HPV-related disease that lasts for at least 8-10 years. The vaccine has been available for only 10 years, so more will be known as time goes on. There is no evidence to suggest that the HPV vaccine loses the ability to provide protection over time.

### Will the vaccine require a booster?

In the U.S., the HPV vaccine series requires three shots given over 6 months; booster doses are not recommended. Like all vaccines, HPV vaccine is monitored continually to make sure it remains safe and effective. If protection from HPV vaccine doesn't last as long as it should, then the CDC will review the data and determine if a booster shot should be recommended.

### Does someone need to restart the HPV vaccine series if too much time passes between the shots?

No. If someone waits longer than that the recommended interval between shots, she or he need not restart the series. Even if months or years have passed since the last shot, the series should still be completed.

### What are some possible side effects of HPV vaccination?

Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Many people who get the HPV vaccine have no side effects at all. Some people report having very mild



side effects such as pain, redness, or swelling in the arm where the shot was given; fever; headache or fatigue; nausea; muscle or joint pain; and brief fainting spells. Sitting or lying down for 15 minutes after a vaccination can help prevent fainting and injuries caused by falls. On very rare occasions, severe allergic reactions may occur after vaccination.

### Will the vaccine cause cancer?

The HPV vaccine cannot cause HPV infection or cancer. By contrast, *not* receiving the HPV vaccine at the recommended ages can leave a person vulnerable to cancers caused by HPV.

### Will the vaccine cause my daughter to have trouble getting pregnant later on?

No data suggest that the HPV vaccine has an effect on

a woman's ability to get pregnant in the future. In fact, getting vaccinated and protecting against cervical cancer can help women have healthy pregnancies and healthy babies. *Not* getting the HPV vaccine leaves people vulnerable to HPV infection; for women, this could lead to cervical cancer. Treatment of cervical cancer could leave a woman unable to have children. Even the treatment of cervical pre-cancers caused by HPV can cause preterm labor or problems at the time of delivery. ●

Content sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HPV Vaccines: Vaccinating your Preteen or Teen. Page last updated January 26, 2015. [cdc.gov/hpv/parents/vaccine.html](http://cdc.gov/hpv/parents/vaccine.html); Questions and Answers. Page last updated December 28, 2015. [cdc.gov/hpv/parents/questions-answers.html](http://cdc.gov/hpv/parents/questions-answers.html).

\*Readers are invited to photocopy Patient Education pages in the journal and distribute them to their patients.