

TALKING TO PARENTS ABOUT THE HPV VACCINE

Provider FAQs



Many providers report that talking to parents about the HPV vaccine is difficult and time-consuming. Your strong recommendation is crucial to vaccine acceptance among parents. Below are tips for simple answers to parents' common questions.

What about HPV is so bad that my child needs three shots?

HPV infection as a teen or young adult can lead to painful and deadly cancers later in life. These include cervical, vaginal, vulvar, anal and oropharyngeal (back of the throat) cancer in women and anal, oropharyngeal and penile cancer in men. The HPV vaccine protects against the types of HPV that cause most of these cancers.

How do you get HPV?

HPV is spread through any kind of sexual contact, not just intercourse. HPV can be passed even when the infected person has no signs or symptoms.

Is HPV so common that I should worry about my child becoming infected?

Yes, HPV is very common. The **majority** of sexually active people will have HPV infection at some point in their lives.

Is giving the HPV vaccine to teens like giving them a license to have sex?

No—several studies show that teens vaccinated against HPV do not have sex at an earlier age and do **not** have more sexual partners than their peers who are not vaccinated.

My child is too young to be sexually active. Why should my child get the HPV vaccine now?

The HPV vaccine is most effective when given before any sexual activity (i.e., potential exposure to HPV). As with other diseases, like measles, it is important to vaccinate well before exposure to an infection. Studies also show that the HPV vaccine works best when given before age 15 because the body has a higher immune response.

How well does the HPV vaccine work?

HPV vaccine works very well. It protects against the most common cancer-causing types of HPV. Studies conducted before the vaccine was licensed showed that the vaccine was nearly 100% effective in preventing cervical, vaginal

and vulvar abnormalities and 75% effective in preventing anal abnormalities. These abnormalities can lead to cancer. Within the vaccine's first four years of use in the U.S., infections with the types of HPV the vaccine prevents dropped by 56% among teen girls.

How long does the HPV vaccine provide protection?

Data from clinical trials and ongoing research since the vaccine became available show that the HPV vaccine provides protection for at least 10 years. There is no evidence to suggest that the vaccine loses its ability to protect over time.

How do I know the HPV vaccine is safe?

All vaccines used in the U.S. must go through rigorous testing before they are approved and can be given. Even after vaccines are in use, they are continually monitored for safety. **Over 67 million** doses of HPV vaccine have been distributed in the U.S., and **175 million** have been given worldwide. Multiple studies have found no serious safety concerns linked to HPV vaccine.

What are the side effects of the HPV vaccine?

The most common side effects are usually mild, short-lived and go away on their own. They include soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site, mild to moderate fever and headache. The safety concern most frequently reported is a brief fainting spell, which is not specific to HPV vaccine and is more common among teens than children or adults following any vaccination.

Is it safe to get the HPV vaccine with other shots?

Yes, HPV vaccine is safe to receive with other vaccines. Your child's visit to receive the meningococcal vaccine and the Tdap vaccine, which is required for sixth-grade entry, is the best time to vaccinate your child against HPV.