



**Department of Health
and Mental Hygiene**

Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
Commissioner

Summer 2017

Dear Colleague:

Each year in the U.S., 31,500 men and women get cancer caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). Ensuring that young people get vaccinated can spare them from painful or deadly illnesses later in life.

The 9-valent HPV vaccine protects against the most common HPV types that cause 79% of HPV-associated cancers in women and 67% in men.

Vaccination against HPV is now the standard of care. Evidence continues to accrue regarding the safety and effectiveness of HPV vaccine, as well as its role in reducing the incidence of genital warts and abnormal Pap smears. Over 70% of preteens aged 13-17 years in New York City have started the vaccine series, and over 50% have completed it. New York City's rates continue to rise each year, but still fall dramatically short of the Healthy People 2020 national goal of 80% coverage for HPV vaccine series completion.

The Health Department wants to partner with you and provide tools and guidance to increase rates at your facility. This toolkit is centered on three core provider strategies:

- 1. Give a STRONG recommendation for the HPV vaccine.** Focus on cancer prevention. A physician's recommendation is one of the best predictors of whether a patient will be vaccinated at a visit. Do not address sexual transmission unless directly asked. (After all, we don't talk about tetanus or meningococcal transmission.)
- 2. Bundle adolescent vaccines.** Offer HPV vaccine to all 11- and 12-year-old patients at the same time and in the same way as the Tdap and meningococcal vaccines. Do not single out the HPV vaccine in your discussions with parents.
- 3. Avoid missed opportunities to vaccinate your patients against HPV.** The persistent gap in coverage between HPV vaccine and the other recommended adolescent vaccines indicate missed opportunities to protect patients from HPV-associated cancers. Use every healthcare visit as an opportunity to ensure your patient is fully vaccinated against HPV.

We look forward to partnering with you to increase HPV vaccination rates and protect the health of young New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mary T. Bassett'.

Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
Commissioner