

# Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

#96 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

## Protect Your Child from HPV Vaccinate: The Earlier the Better



Available in Spanish, Chinese and other languages: Call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health).





## HPV Vaccine: Why *All* Preteens and Teens Should Get Vaccinated

- The HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine prevents the most common types of HPV infection that cause cervical and anal cancers. The vaccine also prevents genital warts.

### HPV is common

- HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States. About 20 million people in the United States are infected with HPV. Another 6.2 million get it each year.
- More than half of sexually active people get HPV at some time in their lives. Most get it when they are younger and first become sexually active.
- HPV often has no symptoms. A person can be infected with HPV – and pass it on – without knowing it.
- HPV can cause cervical cancer in women. It can also cause anal cancer, oral cancer and less common cancers, such as cancer of the penis and cancer of the vagina.
- Several studies suggest that an increase in HPV-related cancers around middle age is linked to exposure to HPV years earlier.

## HPV vaccine is safe and effective

- The vaccine is highly effective against the types of HPV that can cause most cervical and anal cancers and most genital warts.
- Studies have shown that HPV vaccine is very safe. It has been widely used in the U.S. and around the world since 2006.
- Serious side effects from HPV vaccine are rare. The most common side effects are typically mild, such as soreness where the shot was given.
- You can't get HPV from the HPV vaccine. It doesn't contain the HPV virus.

## Who should get the HPV vaccine?

### *The earlier the better: All girls and boys between ages 11 and 12*

- Girls and boys should get the HPV vaccine *before* they become sexually active. They will get its *full* benefit if they have not yet been exposed to HPV.
- The vaccine may be given starting at age 9.

### *Teens and young adults ages 13 to 26 who were not vaccinated when they were younger*

- The vaccine works best when it's given before having any kind of sex. But teens and young adults can still benefit from the HPV vaccine even if they're sexually active.
- If a person is vaccinated after he or she is already infected with a type of HPV covered by the vaccine, the vaccine will not protect against that type. But it will still protect against other types.





## How is the vaccine given?

- The vaccine is given in 3 shots over 6 months.
- Girls and boys should get the full series to be fully protected.

## Where to get the HPV vaccine

- Call your child's doctor to find out if the vaccine is available.
- Health Department immunization clinics offer free or low-cost HPV vaccine for preteens and teens.
- For more information about where to get the HPV vaccine, call **311**.

### More Information

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- New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) and search for **HPV vaccine**, or call **311**
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov/std/hpv](http://cdc.gov/std/hpv)
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration: [fda.gov](http://fda.gov)
- National Cancer Institute: [cancer.gov](http://cancer.gov)
- American Cancer Society: [cancer.org](http://cancer.org)

**DIAL  
311**

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# HPV Vaccine: Myths and Facts

1

**Myth:** My child is too young to get the HPV vaccine.

**Fact:** The HPV vaccine works best when given long before your preteen or teen has any kind of sexual contact. This will give your child time to build up protection from HPV infection. It's important to vaccinate your child now, before he or she is old enough to worry about HPV.

2

**Myth:** Giving the HPV vaccine to teens is like giving them a license to have sex.

**Fact:** Several studies show that teens vaccinated against HPV do not have more sex or more sexual partners than those not vaccinated.

3

**Myth:** You can only get HPV through sexual intercourse.

**Fact:** You can get HPV through any kind of sex, including anal and oral sex and other skin-to-skin sexual contact.

4

**Myth:** Women who have had the HPV vaccine don't need Pap tests.

**Fact:** The HPV vaccine does not prevent all types of cervical cancer, so it's important for women to get regular cervical cancer screenings. For more information about cervical cancer screening, visit [nyc.gov/health](https://nyc.gov/health) and search for **Pap test**, or call **311**.

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**Protect Your Child from HPV**  
**Vaccinate: The Earlier the Better**

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