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# What Parents Should Know About the HPV Vaccines

## Why should my child get the HPV vaccine?

Infection with the human papillomavirus (HPV) can cause several cancers. HPV infection can't be treated, but a vaccine can help prevent it. The virus is so common, about 8 out of 10 people will get it at some point in their lives. But most infected people don't know they're infected. We also know most, but not all, HPV infections go away on their own without lasting health problems. But we don't know which infections will turn into cancer.

The HPV vaccine can help prevent 6 types of cancer later in life:

- Cancers of the cervix, throat, vagina, vulva, and anus in girls
- Cancers of the throat, penis, and anus in boys

It can also help prevent genital warts.

The best way to prevent HPV infection is to get vaccinated. **That is why it is important that all children get vaccinated against HPV.**

## When should my child get the HPV vaccine?

The vaccine is given as a series of shots. HPV vaccination works best when given between ages 9 and 12.

Children and young adults age 13 through 26 who have not been vaccinated, or who haven't gotten all their doses, should get the vaccine as soon as possible. Vaccination

of young adults will not prevent as many cancers as vaccination of children and teens.

The American Cancer Society does not recommend HPV vaccination for persons older than 26 years.

### **Does the vaccine have side effects? Is it safe?**

The HPV vaccine is safe. The most common side effects from HPV vaccination are mild and might include: fever, headache, and pain and redness in the arm where the shot was given.

Sometimes children and teens faint after getting a shot, including the HPV vaccine. Sitting or lying down when getting a shot, and staying in that position for about 15 minutes afterwards, can help prevent fainting.

Children and teens with an allergy to yeast or with an allergy to any other component of the vaccine that causes anaphylaxis should not receive the HPV vaccine.

### **Will my health insurance cover the vaccination?**

Most health insurance covers the cost of the HPV vaccine series. Ask your insurance company to make sure. The HPV vaccine is part of the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. This program covers the cost of the HPV vaccine. It also covers the cost of other vaccines for free up to age 19 for families without insurance.

To learn more about human papillomavirus, see [HPV Vaccines<sup>1</sup>](#) and [HPV and HPV testing<sup>2</sup>](#).

To learn more about how HPV vaccination helps prevent cancer, visit [Mission: HPV Cancer Free<sup>3</sup>](#).

### **Hyperlinks**

1. [www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/infectious-agents/hpv/hpv-vaccines.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/infectious-agents/hpv/hpv-vaccines.html)
2. [www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/infectious-agents/hpv/hpv-and-hpv-testing.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/infectious-agents/hpv/hpv-and-hpv-testing.html)
3. [/content/cancer/en/cancer/cancer-causes/infectious-agents/hpv/mission-hpv-cancer-free.html](http://content/cancer/en/cancer/cancer-causes/infectious-agents/hpv/mission-hpv-cancer-free.html)

## References

Saslow D, Andrews KS, Manassaram-Baptiste D, et al. Human papillomavirus vaccination 2020 guideline update: American Cancer Society guideline adaptation. *CA Cancer J Clin.* 2020; DOI: 10.3322/caac.21616.

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