



TALKING TO YOUR PRETEEN ABOUT THE HPV VACCINE

HPV can cause cancers of the mouth, throat, anus and genitals -cervix and vulva in females, penis in males— and genital warts. There are over 30,000 of these cancers each year—and most could be prevented with HPV vaccine. It is important for children to get the vaccine series before any sexual activity. The information below will help you talk with your child about the vaccine

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children get 2 doses of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine between the ages of 9 and 12, or 3 doses during the teen years if they missed getting it earlier.

WHAT DO MY CHILD AND I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HPV?

The key facts about HPV and the HPV vaccine are:

- HPV is easily spread by intimate sexual contact including skin-to-skin contact, and can be passed even when an infected person has no signs or symptoms
- Certain strains of HPV cause cancers of the cervix, mouth, throat, anus and genitals and genital warts.
- Receiving the recommended doses of HPV vaccine before your child is exposed to the virus can prevent many cases of these cancers and genital warts.
- Most people who become infected with HPV get it within 2-3 years of their first sexual activity.
- Even someone who waits until marriage for sex and only has one partner can still get HPV.
- HPV vaccine is recommended for boys and girls between the ages of 9 and 12 years old. The HPV vaccine is more effective when given at this age rather than waiting until a child is older.

WHY VACCINATE MY CHILD NOW— BEFORE SEX IS EVEN AN ISSUE?

Studies show that kids who complete all two doses of HPV vaccines by age 14 have much lower rates of cervical pre-cancer and genital warts than those who are vaccinated later. Preteens make more antibodies from the vaccine shots, which may translate into better protection.

IF I WANT MY CHILD TO GET THE HPV VACCINE, WILL HE OR SHE THINK I APPROVE OF TEEN SEX?

A study showed that preteens and teens who got HPV vaccine did not start having sex at an earlier age than those who did not receive the vaccine. If you are concerned that your child will assume you are “giving them permission to have sex,” tell your child what’s important to you. For example: “I think you are much too young for sex, but it is important for you to be as protected as possible when the day comes. That is why you should get the HPV vaccine now.”

IF I HAVEN'T HAD “THE SEX TALK” WITH MY CHILD, SHOULD I START NOW?

You do not have to discuss sex with your preteens before giving them the HPV vaccine. However, if you and your child are ready to have this conversation, now is a good time to start. Many children receive sex education in school at about age 11 or 12. When you talk about sex, share facts, feelings, and values; give your child guidance about making smart, safe choices around sex. The key is to let your children know that they can freely come to you with questions about sex.



American Academy of Pediatrics



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