



Effectively Communicating with Parents about the HPV Vaccine

What physicians say matters;
how physicians say it matters even more.

Many parents will choose to give their daughters the HPV vaccine when their physicians strongly recommend the vaccine and answer their questions.

Recommend HPV vaccine in the same way as you recommend other vaccines.

Consider saying,

"Your daughter is now 9 years old, she is due for the vaccine against cancer of the cervix and other HPV-related cancers. It is important for her health. I recommend fixing an appointment for her to get the first shot."

If a parent hesitates or asks a question after your recommendation, you may start with asking them,

"Tell me what is your main worry?"

Address parents' questions and concerns using the responses below as a starting point.

Why does my child need HPV vaccination?

HPV vaccination is important because it will protect your daughter from HPV infections that can cause cervical and four other types of cancer (throat, vagina, vulva, and anus) when she is older. On-time vaccination, between 9-14 years, provides the best protection.

Why do they need HPV vaccination at such a young age?

HPV vaccination works best when given between ages 9 and 14 because children develop stronger protection against infection when given the vaccine at younger ages. Research shows that on-time vaccination provides more protection from HPV cancers than late vaccination at older ages.

How many doses of HPV vaccine will my daughter need?

Girls ages 9-14 need 2 doses. Children who are immunocompromised, living with HIV, or who are 15 years old or older need 3 doses.

Is HPV vaccination safe?

Yes. The HPV vaccine is very safe, just like Tetanus.

Millions of children have safely received the HPV vaccine in over 100 countries. This vaccine is the most studied vaccination on the market and these studies show that it is very safe.

Does the HPV vaccine cause side-effects?

HPV vaccination is very safe. Like other injectable vaccines, the common side effects from HPV vaccination are mild and might include: fever, headache, pain and redness in the arm where the shot was given. Rarely children may faint after getting an injection and they could be injured if they fall. We'll have your child stay seated for about 15 minutes after the vaccine.

Will HPV vaccination affect my daughter's fertility?

HPV vaccine does not cause fertility problems. In fact, the HPV vaccine can help protect fertility by preventing problems linked to treatment of cervical precancer and cancer.

What cancers are caused by HPV?

HPV, or human papillomavirus, is a common virus that can cause six types of cancer. In women, HPV can cause cervical, throat, anal, vaginal, and vulvar cancer. In men, HPV can cause throat, anal, and penile cancer.

Is my child really at risk for HPV infection?

HPV is a very common infection. Nearly everyone will get a HPV infection at some point in their lives. On-time HPV vaccination will help protect your daughter from cancers that can be caused by HPV when she is older.

How do you know HPV vaccination works?

HPV vaccination works very well. In countries with high HPV vaccination rates from the start, like Australia, England, and Sweden, cervical cancer cases have already decreased significantly. HPV vaccine has the potential to prevent most cervical cancers.

How long will the HPV vaccine last?

The HPV vaccine provides long-lasting protection. There is enough evidence to suggest that immunity given by HPV vaccination lasts well into adulthood. There is no indication that the vaccine protection lessens with time. Research will continue to look at how long protection against HPV lasts and if booster shots will be needed.

Do I have to pay for the HPV vaccine?

[Note for physicians: In 2023, the HPV vaccine will likely be added to the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP). Once available through the UIP in your state, there should be no or minimal cost for girls who receive it according to the UIP schedule.]

Yes, there is a payment for vaccination. The HPV vaccination will cost ___ Rs today. I consider the cost smaller compared to the possibility of cancer treatment related costs in later years.

Can she not get the vaccine after marriage?

The vaccine is not about marriage, it's about cancer prevention. The HPV vaccine works best when given at younger ages for a stronger immune response and before an individual is exposed to an infection through sexual activity.

Would you give the HPV vaccine to your children?

Yes, my children (or grandchildren) got the HPV vaccine because it is considered very safe and it protects them from cancer. **OR** If I had children or grandchildren that were 9-14, I would get them vaccinated to help protect them from cancer in the future.

I have a friend's daughter that had a bad reaction to the vaccine. Should I be worried?

I can see how this would worry you. What I know is that the HPV vaccine is one of the most studied medications on the market and has been found to be extremely safe. As a physician, it is sad to see a woman dying every 8 minutes in India of cervical cancer which can be prevented. HPV vaccination between 9 - 14 years provides your daughter the best protection against cervical and other HPV cancers.

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