

## Supercharge Your Kid's Cancer Fighting Power

(Originally posted on Vaccinate Your Family's *Shot of Prevention* blog on July 18, 2018)



It's hard to believe how quickly the summer is rushing by. The July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday is in the rearview mirror and stores are already putting their summer clothes on clearance. So now is a good time to start thinking about what you need to do to prepare your kids to go back to school.

### Are You the Parent of an 11- or 12-Year-Old?

Make sure your [preteen gets the three vaccines](#)

that protect against whooping cough (Tdap), meningococcal disease (MenACWY) and HPV-related cancers (HPV).

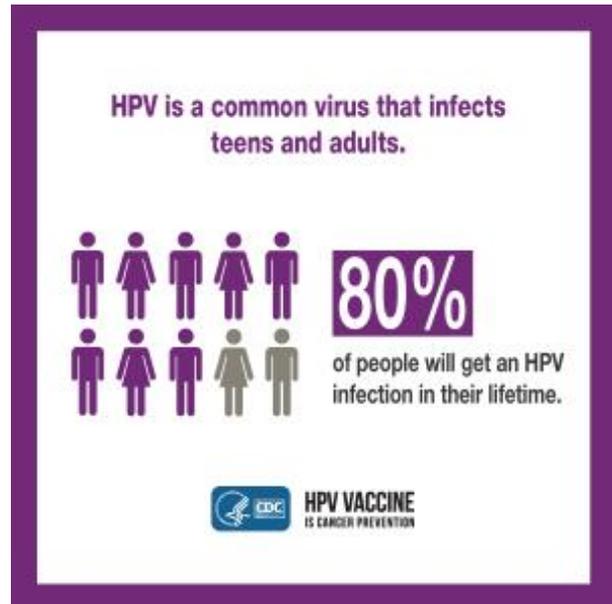
**We can reduce the risk of our children getting certain cancers later in life by helping them make healthy choices *now*, including eating a healthy diet, staying away from tobacco, wearing sunscreen and being physically active. We can also help prevent most HPV cancers with just two shots of the HPV vaccine.**

**HPV vaccination helps prevent [six types of cancers](#) caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV) in both men and women including cervical, vaginal, vulvar, anal, penis and throat cancers. Every year in the United States, HPV causes approximately 32,000 cancers in men and women, and HPV vaccination can prevent most of the cancers from ever developing.**



## HPV is a Common Virus that Infects Teens and Adults

**HPV is so common that most people will get the virus at some point in their lives.** About 14 million people in the U.S., including teens, become infected with HPV each year. HPV is passed during intimate sexual contact. You can get HPV by having vaginal, anal or oral sex with a person who has the virus. And the virus can be passed even when an infected person has no signs or symptoms. Most HPV infections go away on their own without lasting health problems. However, there is no way to know which infections will turn into cancer. That is why it is important that all children get vaccinated against HPV.



## Vaccines are for Prevention, Not Treatment

Since vaccines are for prevention, not treatment, they only work if given BEFORE coming in contact with a virus. **That's why you want to get your child vaccinated against HPV at 11 or 12 years old.**

Don't Wait to Vaccinate

  
cancer.org/HPV

**DID YOU KNOW...** Doctors recommend that girls and boys get vaccinated against HPV at age 11 or 12. The series should be completed by age 13.



**Age Matters**  
When you vaccinate your child on time, you help protect them from HPV cancers. The HPV vaccination works best when given at age 11 or 12. **Cancer protection decreases as age at vaccination increases.**

**Cancer Prevention Decreases with Delayed Vaccination**



**Early**  
Ages 9-10  


**On Time**  
Ages 11-12  


**Critical**  
Ages 13-14  


**Last Chance**  
Ages 15-26  


This tool was supported in part by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Cooperative Agreement Number 5U49CE000133-01, ©2017 American Cancer Society, Inc. No. 000029.

In addition, scientific studies have shown that children have the best immune response to the vaccine at these ages. **The HPV vaccine is given as a series of two shots, and the series should be completed by age 13.**

## HPV Vaccines Are Continuously Monitored for Safety

Like all vaccines recommended in the U.S., HPV vaccines are monitored on an ongoing basis to make sure they remain safe and effective. **With approximately 100 million doses of HPV vaccine distributed so far in the U.S., data continues to show that HPV vaccines are safe, effective and give long-lasting protection.**

*Make sure to ask your preteen's healthcare provider about the HPV vaccine at his or her next appointment.*

## Commonly-Asked Questions about HPV Vaccination

### Are HPV vaccines safe?

Yes, numerous research studies have been conducted to make sure HPV vaccines are safe, both before and after the vaccines were licensed. Before the three HPV vaccines were licensed for use in the U.S. by the FDA, each went through years of testing in thousands of people through clinical trials. After being licensed, the CDC and FDA have continued to monitor the safety of the HPV vaccines through the [three surveillance systems in the U.S.](#) Over 100 million doses of HPV vaccines have been distributed in the U.S. so far and HPV vaccines continue to have a [good safety record](#).

Like any vaccine or medicine, HPV vaccines can cause side effects, but the most common side effects are mild. They include pain, redness or swelling in the arm where the shot was given; dizziness; fainting; nausea; and headache. **The benefits of HPV vaccination far outweigh any potential risk of side effects.**

### Does the HPV vaccine contain dangerous ingredients?

No, the HPV vaccine does NOT contain harmful ingredients. While HPV vaccines, like some other vaccines, do contain a small amount of aluminum in order to boost the body's immune response to the vaccine, it's important to realize that people are actually exposed to aluminum every day. Aluminum is commonly found in numerous food and beverages, water, infant formula and even breast milk. Aluminum-containing vaccines have been used for decades and have been given to more than 1 billion people without problems. The quantities of aluminum present in vaccines are low and are regulated by the FDA's [Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research \(CBER\)](#). [Learn more](#) about the use of aluminum and other ingredients in vaccines.

### If I vaccinate my preteen now, won't the vaccine wear off by the time he/she goes to college?

No, if you vaccinate your child at age 11 or 12, he or she should continue to be protected against HPV through college. Studies continue to monitor how long the vaccine protects against HPV infections, and protection has been shown to last at least 10 years with no signs of the protection weakening.

### If I give my preteen the HPV vaccine, won't it be like giving them permission to start having sex?

No, there have actually been scientific studies that have looked at this issue, and they show that there is no correlation between receiving the HPV vaccine and increased rates of, or earlier engagement in, sexual activity.

## **My child is not sexually active. Why should I vaccinate him/her against HPV now?**

Preteens should receive all recommended doses of the HPV vaccine series long before they begin any type of sexual activity. Even if your child delays sexual activity until marriage, or only has one partner in the future, he or she could still be exposed to HPV if his/her partner has been exposed to HPV. Studies have shown that the HPV vaccine is most effective in preventing the virus, and therefore HPV cancers, when given at age 11 or 12.

## **Can HPV vaccination cause infertility?**

No, there is no evidence that HPV vaccination causes fertility or reproductive problems. In fact, getting HPV vaccine, which protects against cervical cancer, can help ensure a woman's ability to get pregnant and have healthy babies. For example, a woman who develops cervical cancer later in life due to HPV infection may require serious treatments that could leave her unable to have children. It's also possible that treatment for cervical pre-cancer could put a woman at risk for problems with her cervix, which could cause preterm delivery or other problems. HPV vaccination can help prevent these complications.

**Learn more about HPV vaccination at [vaccinateyourfamily.org](http://vaccinateyourfamily.org)**