

The Dangers of HPV to Adolescents

Why is the HPV Vaccine Important?

About 14 million people, including teens, become newly infected with Human Papillomavirus (HPV) each year. HPV is a group of more than 150 related viruses that cause nearly all cervical cancers and many cancers of the vagina, vulva, penis, anus, rectum, and oropharynx. HPV Some HPV types can also cause genital warts.

- 🌐 Every year in the United States, 35,000 women and men are diagnosed with cancer caused by HPV infection. Over 90% of cases of HPV-associated cancer diagnosed each year could be prevented by HPV vaccination. Louisiana currently has some of the highest rates of oropharyngeal cancer in men and women and cervical cancer in women in the country.
- 🌐 Louisiana has the 6th highest rate of cervical cancer in the United States.
- 🌐 Louisiana also has one of the nation's highest death rate from HPV-related cancers.
- 🌐 Receiving the HPV vaccine *after* you are diagnosed with an HPV-related cancer will not provide a cure.

HPV vaccination can prevent uncomfortable testing and treatment even for cervical pre-cancers. Each year in the U.S., more than 300,000 women endure invasive testing and treatment for lesions (changes in the cells) on the cervix that can develop into cancers. Testing and treatment for these “pre-cancers” can have lasting effects.

Spread of HPV

HPV is transmitted through intimate skin-to-skin contact. HPV is so common that nearly all men and women get it at some point in their lives. HPV can be passed even when an infected person has no signs or symptoms. You can develop symptoms years after being infected, making it hard to know when you first became infected.

Symptoms

Most men who get HPV never develop symptoms and the infection usually goes away by itself. However, if HPV does not go away, it can cause genital warts or certain kinds of cancer.

HPV cancer usually does not have symptoms until

it is quite advanced, very serious, and hard to treat. For this reason, it is important for women to get regular cervical cancer [screening](#). This screening can find early signs of disease so that problems can be treated early, before ever turning into cancer.

When should my child be vaccinated?

The HPV vaccine is recommended for preteen boys and girls aged 9 to 12 so to protect them before they are ever exposed to the virus. HPV vaccine produces a higher immune response in preteens than in older adolescents. The protection provided by the vaccine decreases as the age when vaccinated increases. If your teen hasn't gotten the vaccine yet, talk to their doctor about getting it as soon as possible. HPV vaccination is a series of 2 or 3 shots given over several months. The best way to remember to get your child all of the doses they need is to make an appointment for the remaining shots before leaving the doctor's office or clinic.

Is the HPV Vaccination safe?

Yes. Gardasil 9 is safe, effective, and recommended by the CDC. Many studies have looked at the safety of HPV vaccines in the United States. An overview of these studies can be found on the [vaccine safety publications page](#).

Are there Side Effects?

Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Most people who get the HPV vaccine have no side effects at all. Some people report having mild side effects similar to those after receiving any vaccine, such as a sore arm from the shot for a day or two. The most common side effects are usually mild and go away on their own.

Fainting (also known as syncope) and related symptoms (such as jerking movements) can happen after any medical procedure. Some people, especially teens, faint after getting vaccinated. To prevent fainting and related injuries, people receiving HPV vaccines should sit or lie down during vaccination, then remain seated for 15 minutes after the shot.

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Common Side Effects of the HPV Vaccine:

- Pain, redness, or swelling in the arm where the shot was given
- Fever
- Headache or feeling tired
- Nausea
- Muscle or joint pain

How do the benefits of HPV vaccines compare to the risks?

The CDC has carefully studied the risks and benefits of HPV vaccination. HPV vaccination is recommended because the benefits, such as prevention of cancer, far outweigh the risks of possible side effects. Health decisions are personal, and each individual should make choices that are right for themselves and their families. It is important to remember that choosing not to vaccinate is a serious choice—HPV vaccines prevent 9 types of serious cancers and other diseases in both males and females.

Where can I get my adolescent vaccinated?

Many private doctors and Parish Health Units provide immunizations. Call your healthcare provider or Parish Health Unit to make a vaccination appointment.

How can I get help paying for these vaccines?

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program provides vaccines for children ages 18 years and younger, who are not insured, Medicaid-eligible, American Indian or Alaska Native. You can find out more about the VFC program by going online to www.cdc.gov and typing VFC in the search box.

Information about vaccine availability is on the Louisiana Department of Health Immunization webpage:

<http://www.ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/3688>

Resources for Parents and Adolescents:

- Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health: www.ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/subhome/61
- Centers for Disease Control HPV: www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/index.html
- American Association of Pediatrics HPV toolkit: www.aap.org/hpvtoolkit
- Louisiana AAP Adolescent Vaccine toolkit: <https://www.laaap.org/adolescent-vaccine-toolkit/>
- Vaccinate Before You Graduate: <https://www.laaap.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/VBYG-Key-Messages.pdf>
- Louisiana Cancer Prevention and Control Program: <http://louisianacancer.org/>

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for a consultation with a healthcare provider. If you have any questions about the disease described above or think that you may have this infection, consult a healthcare provider.

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