Protecting Children From Cancer
New HPV Vaccine Guidance

If you as a parent could prevent your children from a diagnosis of cancer, would you? This is a question parents of children and young adults are asked every day at pediatrician offices, local medical clinics, and health departments across the United States, and right here in Central Illinois. It's a good start for a serious discussion on preventing some cancers over a lifetime. It’s also now an opportunity for action in cancer prevention with the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine.

Want to know why the HPV vaccine is important? The vaccine offers protection for both men and women against nine viruses known to cause cancers such as cervical, penile, anal, and oropharyngeal. It’s estimated that 80% or 8 out of 10 Americans are currently infected with HPV, and most new infections occur in teens and young adults. Some of these infections are minor and clear up on their own, while others lead to serious diseases months or years after infection. There’s no way to tell who will or who won’t clear the virus. The good news is the HPV vaccine series can lower the risk of getting HPV-related diseases. Since most new infections are diagnosed in young people, the vaccine is licensed and recommended for youth between the ages 11-26.

Did you also know protecting your child from an HPV infection just got easier? Yes, it's true. Young people under age 15 only need 2 doses of vaccine separated by 6 months, rather than the recommended series of 3 to protect against cancers caused by HPV. Vaccination with the HPV vaccine is recommended beginning at age 11-12 for all males and females. For vaccination beginning at age 15-26 years, the schedule includes 3 doses, separated at 1-2 months, and 6 months.

How safe and effective is the HPV vaccine or any vaccine, for that matter? These are frequently asked questions many parents have. The answers to these questions are available through medically reliable studies published yearly. Vaccines have had
multiple studies and clinical trials to ensure safety and efficacy. The HPV vaccine is both safe and highly effective for the prevention of HPV infection and disease. Your local health department or healthcare provider can provide you with fact sheets on HPV and other vaccines. Parents can also check for vaccine information on reputable and recommended online websites such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Immunization Action Coalition. A solid understanding of reliable research is key for parents to make any informed decision regarding their family's health and wellness.

Now the last question is usually how can I get this important cancer prevention vaccine for my children? That’s easy. Call your local health department or your healthcare provider about this safe, effective HPV vaccine and schedule an appointment. Help protect your family.

Learn more about the benefits of public health policies and programs at www.pcchd.org - Peoria City/County Health Department, a nationally accredited public health department.

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The Peoria City/County Health Department continues efforts to improve community health in Peoria County with the overarching goal “to increase the number of people who are healthy at every stage of life.”