

6 Facts About the HPV Vaccine Your Employees Should Know



Your employees who are parents are probably familiar with most of the preventive care recommended for children, like annual well visits and vaccinations for diseases like measles and polio. But they may have questions about one of the newer recommendations: The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.

The HPV vaccine, first introduced in 2006, protects against HPV infections that can lead to certain types of cancer and genital warts in both men and women. One of the most common cancers caused by HPV, in women, is cervical cancer. So, in honor of Cervical Cancer Awareness month, we rounded up a few important facts about the HPV vaccine. We hope you'll share them with your employees. (For more educational resources, visit the Centers for Disease Control website at cdc.gov/hpv/parents.)

1 HPV is more common than you think.

About 80% of people will get an HPV infection in their lifetime. The types of HPV that can cause cancer are spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact, with or without sexual intercourse. Most people who have HPV don't even know they have it, which is why it's so widespread. Most HPV infections go away on their own, but those that don't can cause cancer.

2**The HPV vaccine could prevent more than 90% of cancers caused by HPV.**

Every year in the United States, an estimated 34,800 women and men are diagnosed with a cancer caused by HPV infection, and 4,000 women die of cervical cancer. But the vast majority of cancers caused by HPV are now preventable, thanks to the vaccine. Multiple studies have shown that the HPV vaccine is effective against cervical infections, genital warts and oral HPV infections.

3**The HPV vaccine isn't just for girls.**

HPV can cause cancers of the mouth and throat as well as penile and anal cancer. Because both men and women can carry and transmit HPV, it's important for both boys and girls to get the vaccine.

4**The CDC recommend the HPV vaccine for all adolescents at age 11 or 12.**

The Centers for Disease Control recommend that children get the HPV vaccine as pre-teens, in two doses spread over 6-12 months. The vaccine can also be given between ages 15-26 but must be given in three separate doses instead of just two. Studies have shown that 2 doses of HPV vaccine given to 9-14-year-olds at least 6 months apart provided as good as or better protection than 3 doses given to older adolescents or young adults, which is why doctors recommend starting early.

5**The HPV vaccine doesn't make teens more likely to be promiscuous.**

Some parents may feel uncomfortable about giving their pre-teen or teen a vaccine to prevent a sexually transmitted disease. They worry that if teens feel like it's safer to have sex, they'll become sexually active earlier. But studies show that getting the HPV vaccine doesn't make teens more likely to start having sex.

6**Finally, and most important: The HPV vaccine is safe.**

According to the CDC, more than 120 million doses of HPV vaccines have been distributed in the United States, and there's plentiful data showing that the vaccine is safe. Like any vaccine or medicine, HPV vaccines may cause minor side effects in some people, like pain, redness, or swelling in the arm where the vaccine was given. But the chances of these happening with the HPV vaccine are no higher than with any other vaccine, and serious allergic reactions are extremely rare.

At Tufts Health Plan, we're committed to keeping your employees and their families healthy. That's why the HPV vaccine is covered in full for all children and young adults on Tufts Health Plan employer-sponsored plans. Learn more about preventive care covered by Tufts Health Plan.

tuftshealthplan.com/preventivecare

Source: The Centers for Disease Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/index.html>