

Tips and Time-savers for Talking with Parents about HPV Vaccine

Recommend the HPV vaccine series the same way you recommend the other adolescent vaccines. For example, you can say “Your child needs these shots today,” and name all of the vaccines recommended for the child’s age.

Parents may be interested in vaccinating, yet still have questions. Taking the time to listen to parents’ questions helps you save time and give an effective response. CDC research shows these straightforward messages work with parents when discussing HPV vaccine—and are easy for you or your staff to deliver.



- CDC RESEARCH SHOWS:** The “HPV vaccine is cancer prevention” message resonates strongly with parents. In addition, studies show that a strong recommendation from you is the single best predictor of vaccination.
- TRY SAYING:** HPV vaccine is very important because it prevents cancer. I want your child to be protected from cancer. That’s why I’m recommending that your daughter/son receive the first dose of HPV vaccine today.
- CDC RESEARCH SHOWS:** Disease prevalence is not understood, and parents are unclear about what the vaccine actually protects against.
- TRY SAYING:** HPV can cause cancers of the cervix, vagina, and vulva in women, cancer of the penis in men, and cancers of the anus and the mouth or throat in both women and men. There are about 26,000 of these cancers each year—and most could be prevented with HPV vaccine. There are also many more precancerous conditions requiring treatment that can have lasting effects.
- CDC RESEARCH SHOWS:** Parents want a concrete reason to understand the recommendation that 11–12 year olds receive HPV vaccine.
- TRY SAYING:** We’re vaccinating today so your child will have the best protection possible long before the start of any kind of sexual activity. We vaccinate people well before they are exposed to an infection, as is the case with measles and the other recommended childhood vaccines. Similarly, we want to vaccinate children well before they get exposed to HPV.
- CDC RESEARCH SHOWS:** Parents may be concerned that vaccinating may be perceived by the child as permission to have sex.
- TRY SAYING:** Research has shown that getting the HPV vaccine does not make kids more likely to be sexually active or start having sex at a younger age.
- CDC RESEARCH SHOWS:** Parents might believe their child won’t be exposed to HPV because they aren’t sexually active or may not be for a long time.
- TRY SAYING:** HPV is so common that almost everyone will be infected at some point. It is estimated that 79 million Americans are currently infected with 14 million new HPV infections each year. Most people infected will never know. So even if your son/daughter waits until marriage to have sex, or only has one partner in the future, he/she could still be exposed if their partner has been exposed.
- CDC RESEARCH SHOWS:** Emphasizing your personal belief in the importance of HPV vaccine helps parents feel secure in their decision.
- TRY SAYING:** I strongly believe in the importance of this cancer-preventing vaccine, and I have given HPV vaccine to my son/daughter/grandchild/niece/nephew/friend’s children. Experts (like the American Academy of Pediatrics, cancer doctors, and the CDC) also agree that this vaccine is very important for your child.
- CDC RESEARCH SHOWS:** Understanding that the side effects are minor and emphasizing the extensive research that vaccines must undergo can help parents feel reassured.
- TRY SAYING:** HPV vaccine has been carefully studied by medical and scientific experts. HPV vaccine has been shown to be very effective and very safe. Like other shots, most side effects are mild, primarily pain or redness in the arm. This should go away quickly, and HPV vaccine has not been associated with any long-term side effects. Since 2006, about 57 million doses of HPV vaccine have been distributed in the U.S., and in the years of HPV vaccine safety studies and monitoring, no serious safety concerns have been identified.
- CDC RESEARCH SHOWS:** Parents want to know that HPV vaccine is effective.
- TRY SAYING:** In clinical trials of boys and girls, the vaccine was shown to be extremely effective. In addition, studies in the U.S. and other countries that have introduced HPV vaccine have shown a significant reduction in infections caused by the HPV types targeted by the vaccine.
- CDC RESEARCH SHOWS:** Many parents do not know that the full vaccine series requires 3 shots. Your reminder will help them to complete the series.
- TRY SAYING:** I want to make sure that your son/daughter receives all 3 shots of HPV vaccine to give them the best possible protection from cancer caused by HPV. Please make sure to make appointments on the way out, and put those appointments on your calendar before you leave the office today!



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