

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Dear Parent or Guardian

As a parent, there is nothing more important than safeguarding your child's health. The Washington State Legislature requires us to make information available to you about human papillomavirus (HPV) and how to prevent it. Know the facts about HPV and the vaccine available to protect your child.

What is HPV?

HPV is a common virus. Most people exposed to HPV will never develop health issues. But for others, HPV causes major health problems, including cervical, anal, vulvar, mouth, and throat cancer. Most infected people have no symptoms and may spread the virus without knowing it. HPV spreads mainly through sexual contact.

How can I protect my child from HPV?

Make sure your child gets the HPV vaccine. The vaccine is highly effective. The best time to get it is before sexual activity ever starts. The HPV vaccine can prevent infection from some of the most common and serious types of HPV that cause cancer and genital warts. The vaccine does not get rid of existing HPV infections.

Who should get the vaccine and when should they get it?

Two doses of HPV vaccine are recommended for all boys and girls starting at ages 9 to 14. If boys or girls do not get the HPV vaccine before age 15, it is recommended for females up to age 26 and for males up to age 21 in a three dose schedule. In addition to HPV vaccine, your 11 to 12 year-old should receive Tdap and meningococcal vaccines.

Where can I find the HPV vaccine?

Ask your doctor, nurse, or local health department to find out more about HPV vaccine and where you can get it. Washington provides all recommended vaccines at no cost for kids through age 18, available from providers across the state. Providers may charge an office visit fee and an administration fee to give the vaccine. People who can't afford the administration fee can ask to have it waived.

For more information on HPV, the vaccine, and cervical cancer:

- Washington State Department of Health
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/DiseasesandVaccines/HumanPapillomavirusHPV>
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/
- American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org