

HPV Vaccine Facts

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The vaccine to help prevent human papillomavirus (HPV) infections is safe and effective. [The American Cancer Society recommends the vaccine as one way to keep more people from getting cancer.](#)¹ HPV vaccination is cancer prevention.

However, myths and rumors shared on social media, blogs, and alternative health websites make claims that may scare people away from this life-saving vaccine. Here are some facts about the HPV vaccine you should know. If you have questions that are not answered here, please call us at 1-800-227-2345. We are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help you.

Fact 1: The vaccine prevents certain cancers.

HPV is known to cause cancers of the [throat](#)², [cervix](#)³, [vulva](#)⁴, [vagina](#)⁵, [penis](#)⁶, and [anus](#)⁷. The HPV vaccine works very well. Studies have shown that the vaccine provides close to 100% protection against infections and pre-cancers caused by certain types of HPV. Giving the vaccine to boys and girls between 9 and 12 years old can prevent more than 90% of HPV cancers when they get older.

Fact 2: The HPV vaccine works best when given between ages 9 and 12

Since vaccines are used to help prevent diseases, children are vaccinated before being exposed to an infection. Most people in the US are exposed to HPV in their teens and early twenties, so it's best to get the vaccine before then, between ages 9 and 12. The body also produces the most antibodies to HPV when the vaccine is given in this age range. Teens and young adults age 13 through 26 who have not been vaccinated, or who haven't gotten all their doses, should get the vaccine as soon as possible. ACS does not recommend HPV vaccination for anyone older than 26 years.

Fact 3: The HPV vaccine is for boys and girls

The HPV vaccine is strongly recommended for boys and girls. It can help protect them from infection with the most common types of HPV that can cause cancer when they get older. HPV is so common that almost everyone (at least 8 out of 10 people in the US) will come in contact with it at some point in their lives.

Most HPV infection goes away without any health problems. However, there is no way to know when it won't and an infection could lead to cancer. Vaccinating your child against HPV helps protect them.

Fact 4: The vaccine is safe.

The HPV vaccine has been used since 2006. The vaccine went through extensive safety testing before becoming available. More than 270 million doses of the HPV vaccine have been given worldwide, including 120 million doses in the US. Scientists and health organizations around the world closely monitor HPV vaccine safety.

In the US, vaccine safety is watched by several national systems that work together to make sure that any harmful effects of vaccines can be found early. More than 100 studies in millions of people worldwide have all shown that the HPV vaccine is safe.

Like any vaccination, there may be common mild side effects from the HPV vaccine that go away quickly like headache or fever. There can be pain, redness, and/or swelling where the shot was given. A small number of people may have a more serious side effect that could occur with any vaccine, such as an allergic reaction or fainting when the vaccine is given. Anyone who has a severe allergy to yeast or any other ingredient in the vaccine should not receive the HPV vaccine.

Fact 5: The HPV vaccine does not contain harmful ingredients.

The ingredients in the HPV vaccine, like all vaccines, help make sure that it is effective and safe. These ingredients occur naturally in the environment, the human body, and foods. For example, the HPV vaccine contains aluminum like the hepatitis B and Tdap vaccines. Aluminum boosts the body's immune response to the vaccine. People are exposed to aluminum every day through food, cooking utensils, water, and even breast milk. Aluminum-containing vaccines have been used for decades and have been given safely to more than 3 billion people.

Fact 6: The HPV vaccine can protect, not harm, fertility.

There are no data to suggest that getting the HPV vaccine will affect your chances of having children later on (future fertility). In fact, the HPV vaccine can help protect women from future fertility problems linked to cervical cancer and pre-cancer. The HPV vaccine is a safe way to help protect health and the ability to have healthy babies.

Fact 7: The HPV vaccine lasts a long time.

When your child gets the HPV vaccine they will make proteins called antibodies that fight the virus. Antibodies give strong and long-lasting protection. Current research shows that there's no sign the vaccine protection lessens with time. Research will continue to look at how long protection against HPV lasts, and if booster shots will be needed.

Fact 8: Most children in the US can get the HPV vaccine for little-to-no cost

Most insurance plans will cover the HPV vaccine cost if it is given according to national guidelines, between ages 9 and 26. But check with your insurance plan to be sure.

The federal [Vaccines for Children \(VFC\) program](#)⁸ covers vaccine costs, including the HPV vaccine, for children and teens who don't have insurance. The VFC program provides free vaccines to children and teens until 18 years of age, who are either Medicaid-eligible, American Indian or Alaska Native, underinsured, or uninsured.

The VFC program also allows children and teens to get VFC vaccines through federally qualified health centers or rural health centers. For more on the VFC program or to find the VFC contact where you live, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/contacts-state.html⁹, or call 1-800-232-4636.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/hpv/acs-recommendations-for-hpv-vaccine-use.html
2. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/oral-cavity-and-oropharyngeal-cancer.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/cervical-cancer.html
4. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/vulvar-cancer.html
5. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/vaginal-cancer.html
6. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/penile-cancer.html
7. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/anal-cancer.html
8. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/index.html
9. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/contacts-state.html

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