



Dear Provider,

This is an urgent call-to-action to you and all health care providers in West Virginia. Since you are a medical practitioner concerned with the health and well-being of your patients, we urge you to make a strong recommendation to parents that their children receive the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine – a vaccine that prevents several types of cancer in men and women. The timing of HPV vaccination is of great importance. The HPV vaccine is recommended at age 11 or 12 and needs to be administered before the patient has contact with HPV viruses in order to prevent infection.

Unfortunately, efforts to vaccinate children against the HPV virus have stalled. Findings from the 2012 National Immunization Survey have shown that only 45% of girls in West Virginia have begun the HPV vaccine series and only 36% have completed it. Only 18% of boys in West Virginia have begun the vaccination series as well. This is troubling considering that the National Cancer Institute's State Cancer Profiles lists West Virginia as having the highest incidence rate of cervical cancer in the nation and the fourth highest annual death rate from this type of cancer.

YOU have the power to change this by making sure children and teens receive this life-saving vaccine. In HPV vaccine we have a tool that can prevent several thousand cases of HPV-related cancers per year if we just use it. We urge you to redouble your efforts to improve HPV immunization rates by presenting HPV vaccination to your patients and/or their guardians as a **MUST**. **Parents overwhelmingly consent to HPV vaccination and keep the subsequent appointments for their sons and daughters to complete the three dose series when their primary care provider *strongly* recommends the vaccination.** In fact, studies have shown that a patient who receives a provider recommendation is 4–5 times more likely to receive the HPV vaccine.

Try it for yourself. One way to strongly recommend the HPV vaccination is to change the manner in which you speak about it. Instead of saying:

“Your child needs to be vaccinated with Tdap and meningitis vaccines for school. Do you want him/her to have the HPV vaccine today, too?”

Try this:

“Your child is due for Tdap, meningitis and HPV vaccinations today.”

Here is why it's so important:

- **Rates of HPV-related cancers have risen dramatically.**

The American Cancer Society calls it “one of the epidemics of the 21st century.” About 79 million Americans, most in their late teens and early 20s, are infected with the human papillomavirus, which can lead to cancer of the cervix, vagina, vulva, anus, penis and head and neck, as well as genital warts.

▪ **HPV's emerging threat: head and neck cancers.**

The HPV virus has surpassed smoking and alcohol use to become the leading cause of head and neck cancers in the United States, particularly among men. There are now 10,000 cases each year, a number that is projected to climb to 16,000 by 2030. If trends continue, oral cancers will overtake cervical cancers as the leading cause of HPV-related tumors by 2020.

▪ **The HPV vaccine works.**

There have been more than 57 million doses of HPV vaccine given in the United States with continued evidence of its safety. Since the HPV vaccination program started in 2006, the prevalence of the virus has dropped nearly 50 percent in girls ages 14 to 19.

▪ **The human toll is preventable.**

CDC research shows low HPV vaccination rates represent 50,000 preventable tragedies – 50,000 girls alive today will develop cervical cancer that could have been prevented if we had reached 80 percent vaccination rates. For every year we delay reaching 80 percent, another 4,400 women will develop cervical cancer.

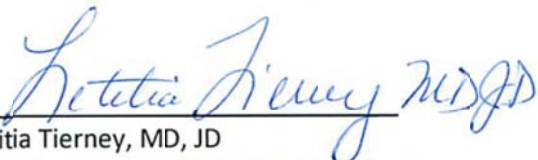
▪ **Vaccination is easy.**

The Vaccine for Children program provides vaccines for children 18 and younger who are under-insured, not insured, Medicaid-eligible or American Indian/Alaska native. In addition, because of the Affordable Care Act, most private health insurance plans cover the HPV vaccine with no co-pay or deductible.

We understand some parents may be hesitant to give their child this vaccine. To help answer any questions parents may have, we have enclosed a CDC talking points sheet. Additional information can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/who/teens/for-hcp/hpv-resources.html>.

How often can we say we have something we know can prevent cancer? We can say it now and we must follow through – quickly.

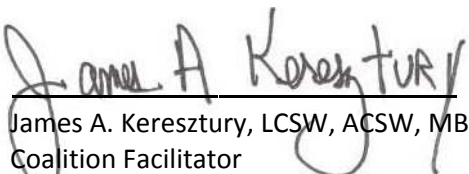
Sincerely,



Letitia Tierney, MD, JD
Commissioner and State Health Officer
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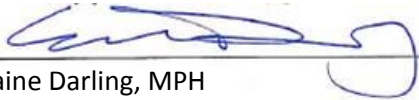
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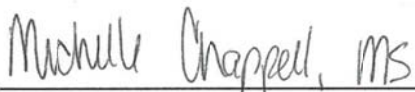
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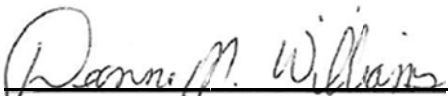
Jody Sperry, RN
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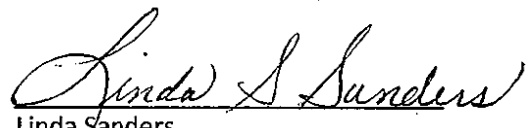
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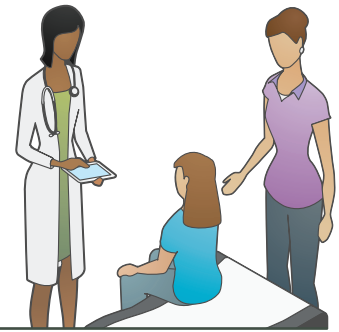


Louise Reese
Chief Executive Officer
WV Primary Care Association

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!



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens | PreteenVaccines@cdc.gov