

February 22, 2023

Dear Pennsylvania Health Providers,

Nationally, the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is estimated to cause about 37,300 new cases of cancer each year.<sup>1</sup>

We have an opportunity to eradicate HPV-associated cancers, and yet too many people are not getting this safe and effective vaccine that prevents six different cancers associated with HPV which include oropharyngeal cancers and approximately 91% of cervical cancers.<sup>2</sup> In Pennsylvania (PA) oral pharyngeal cancer incidence has been trending up since 2005 for males and females of all races. It is now the 8<sup>th</sup> most diagnosed cancer in PA males and 11<sup>th</sup> for females.<sup>3</sup>

A nine-valent HPV vaccine (HPV9) is available to protect against multiple strains, including HPV 16, 18, 31, and 33, the types that cause most cervical and other anogenital cancers, as well as some oropharyngeal cancers. The HPV vaccine is approved for ages **9 years through 45 years for ALL GENDERS**. The American Cancer Society (ACS) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend vaccination at age 9, and many Pennsylvania's vaccine advocates are leading this charge, including the Pennsylvania Chapter of the AAP.

In Pennsylvania, only 68.7% of adolescents age 13-17 are fully vaccinated against HPV-associated cancers.<sup>4</sup> Nationally, approximately 27% of men and 53.6% of women between the ages of 18–26 are vaccinated.<sup>5</sup> In rural communities, HPV vaccination rates are low, yet incidence and mortality rates of HPV-associated cancers are high.<sup>6</sup> The HPV vaccination rate for Pennsylvania adolescents living in non-urban geographic locations drops to an alarmingly low rate of 48.7% compared to the 95.75 rate for  $\geq 1$  dose MenACWY.<sup>7</sup>

We need to address the public health issue and the burden of cancer related to the low HPV vaccination rates of Pennsylvania adolescents and adults. **Provider recommendation for the HPV vaccine is considered the most effective determinant of vaccine uptake compared to other interventions such as parent education.**

**PA has partnered with our neighbors, MD, WV, OH, VA, DC and DE in a multi-state Call-to Action to increase HPV vaccination by strong and consistent provider recommendations and initiation of HPV vaccination starting at age 9. HPV vaccination is cancer prevention!**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/statistics/cases.htm> <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/statistics/cases.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/statistics/cases.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [Pennsylvania Cancer Registry. 2019 Data Set](#)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/coverage/teenvaxview/data-reports/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> McElfish PA, Narcisse MR, Felix HC, Cascante DC, Nagarsheth N, Teeter B, Faramawi MF. Race, Nativity, and Sex Disparities in Human Papillomavirus Vaccination among Young Adults in the USA. *J Racial Ethn Health Disparities*. 2021 Oct;8(5):1260-1266. doi: 10.1007/s40615-020-00886-5. Epub 2020 Oct 8. PMID: 33033889; PMCID: PMC9753349.

<sup>6</sup> Brandt HM, Vanderpool RC, Pilar M, Zubizarreta M, Stradtman LR. A narrative review of HPV vaccination interventions in rural U.S. communities. *Prev Med*. 2021 Apr;145:106407. doi: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2020.106407. Epub 2021 Jan 1. PMID: 33388323.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/coverage/teenvaxview/data-reports/index.html>

**CALL TO ACTION:**

- Set your **electronic health record** notifications from age 9 years through 45 years for men and women. **Initiating the HPV vaccination at age 9 has been shown to increase vaccine completion by 22 times.**<sup>8</sup>
- Make a **strong recommendation for HPV vaccines** for all patients ages 9 years through 26 years. Data shows that your recommendation may improve vaccinations by up to 5 times.<sup>9</sup>
- For adults age 27 years through 45 years, engage in shared decision to help determine the benefits of vaccination.
- Vaccination recommendation should be made in all healthcare settings to include acute, non-acute, GYN, and dental locations.
- Encourage **same day vaccination** in your facility.
- Review your patients who have not completed their 2 or 3 dose series and **proactively recall patients** to your facility.
- Review vaccination status at every visit- not just well checks.
- **Check adult patients** through age 45 to ensure they have completed their HPV series.
- Identify an **immunization champion** at your facility.
- Implement **standing orders** which can be found at [Vaccine Standing Orders for Healthcare Providers \(immunize.org\)](https://www.immunize.org/vaccine-standing-orders-for-healthcare-providers).

[Vaccines for Children Program \(VFC\)](#), provides free HPV vaccines for all kids enrolled in Pennsylvania Medicaid or who have no insurance. The HPV vaccine is a covered benefit for insurances through age 26. Over 95% of insurance cover ages 26 years through 45 years with share decision making which can be documented with an e-prescription / prescription.

Please review the resources and links at the end of the letter.

Thank you for all that you do to improve the health of your patients and for your participation in this important effort to prevent cancer by increasing the uptake of HPV vaccination in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

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<sup>8</sup> O'Leary ST. Why the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends initiating HPV vaccine at age 9. Hum Vaccin Immunother. 2022 Nov 30;18(6):2146434. doi: 10.1080/21645515.2022.2146434. Epub 2022 Nov 20. PMID: 36404635; PMCID: PMC9746363.

<sup>9</sup> Ylitalo KR, Lee H, Mehta NK. Health care provider recommendation, human papillomavirus vaccination, and race/ethnicity in the US National Immunization Survey. Am J Public Health. 2013 Jan;103(1):164-9. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2011.300600. Epub 2012 Jun 14. PMID: 22698055; PMCID: PMC3518336.

## Resources

- [The Pennsylvania Cancer Coalition](#)
- [National HPV Roundtable – The official website of the National HPV Vaccination Roundtable](#)
- Clinician & Support Staff Action Guides, including Dental Health Care Providers: <https://hpvroundtable.org/action-guides/>
- Age 9 Fact sheets, down-loadable toolkit and videos: <https://hpvroundtable.org/hpv-vaccination-starts-at-9/>
- [Full article: Why the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends initiating HPV vaccine at age 9 \(tandfonline.com\)](#)
- Vaccine For Children: [VFC webpage](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics webpage featuring various tools](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics HPV vaccination patient care webpage](#)