

May 14, 2024

Dear District of Columbia Healthcare Providers,

We are at a pivotal moment in the fight against Human Papillomavirus (HPV), a leading cause of several types of cancer. Every year, HPV is estimated to be responsible for 37,000 new cancer cases nationwide. However, we have the power to dramatically reduce HPV-associated cancers through vaccination.

The HPV vaccine offers protection against six types of cancers linked to HPV, including cervical and oropharyngeal cancers. Approved for use in individuals as young as 9 through 45 years of all genders, the vaccine is not only safe and effective but offers long-lasting protection. Despite its availability, vaccination rates are not where they need to be to fully realize this potential.

As trusted healthcare providers, your recommendation carries immense weight and vaccination before exposure is key. The decision to start HPV vaccination at age 9 is strongly supported by the American Cancer Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics because it is associated with up to 30% higher series completion by age 13 years, as opposed to initiation at 11 years. This is where you come in.

**We urge you to consider the following actions:**

- **Champion the Vaccine Early:** Offer HPV vaccination starting at age 9. Your strong recommendation can increase vaccination rates by up to fivefold.
- **Simplify the Process:** Offer vaccination at every visit, not just well child visits. If you are unable to offer the vaccine, partner with your closest pharmacies.
- **Engage and Remind:** Utilize tools such as electronic health record-based patient reminders to ensure your patients are aware of and receive the HPV vaccine.
- **Screen and/or Refer:** Screen or refer individuals with a cervix to cervical cancer screening using the American Cancer Society guidelines.

The power to prevent cancer lies in our hands. By adopting these practices, you can play a critical role in increasing HPV vaccination rates in our community and detecting precancerous conditions early. DC Health, in collaboration with surrounding jurisdictions and local organizations, offers resources and support to facilitate these efforts, including free HPV vaccines for eligible children up to age 19.

Your dedication to patient care is invaluable, and we thank you for your continued commitment to improving public health. By working together, we can achieve a future where HPV-related cancers are a thing of the past.

In health,



Ayanna Bennett, MD, MSPH, FAAP  
Director, DC Department of Health

## Resources

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Information for healthcare professionals (<https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/hcp/index.html>)
- Information for caregivers (<https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/index.html>)

### American Academy of Pediatrics Resources

- American Academy of Pediatrics webpage featuring various tools and resources (<https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/campaigns-and-toolkits/human-papillomavirus-hpv>)
- American Academy of Pediatrics HPV vaccination patient care webpage (<https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/immunizations/human-papillomavirus-vaccines/>)
- Full article: [Why the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends initiating HPV vaccine at age 9 \(tandfonline.com\)](https://www.tandfonline.com)

### National HPV Roundtable Clinical and Health System Action Guides

#### Clinical Guides

- Physicians, Physician Assistants & Nurse Practitioners: <http://hpvroundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PROVIDERS-Action-Guide-WEB.pdf>
- Nurses & Medical Assistants: <http://hpvroundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/RNMA-Action-Guide-WEB.pdf>
- Dentists & Hygienists: <http://hpvroundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/DENTAL-Action-Guide-WEB.pdf>
- Office Administrative Staff Teams: <http://hpvroundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/OFFICE-TEAMS-Action-Guide-WEB.pdf>

#### Systems Guides

- Small Private Practices: <http://hpvroundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SMALL-PRACTICES-Action-Guide-WEB.pdf>
- Large Health Systems: <http://hpvroundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/LARGE-SYSTEMS-Action-Guide-WEB.pdf>

### Evidence Supporting HPV Vaccine Initiation at 9 years

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9980633/#:~:text=Among%20100%2C117%20privately%20insured%20individuals,001>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10026893/>

### District Immunization Providers Offering No Cost HPV Vaccination

- [https://dchealth.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doh/service\\_content/attachments/2024-Pediatric-Locations\\_20240314.pdf](https://dchealth.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doh/service_content/attachments/2024-Pediatric-Locations_20240314.pdf)