

# WORLD HPV DAY MARCH 4



March 4, 2024

## Dear Virginia Healthcare Providers,

This letter is to bring your attention to March 4, International Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Awareness Day, and what you can do to protect your patients against this virus and the potential cancer it causes every day. HPV is associated with six different kinds of cancer, including most cases of oropharyngeal cancers and almost all cases of cervical cancer. Nationally, the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is estimated to cause more than 37,000 new cases of cancer each year,<sup>1</sup> however HPV vaccination is safe and effective at protecting against this virus.

The HPV vaccine prevents cancer-causing HPV infections and pre-cancers and is approved for ages **9 years through 45 years for people of all genders**. The American Cancer Society and American Academy of Pediatrics recommend HPV vaccination starting at age 9, and some of Virginia's biggest advocates are leading this charge, including the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), ImmunizeVA, and the Cancer Action Coalition of Virginia (CACV).

We have an opportunity to eradicate HPV-associated cancers through HPV vaccination, and yet many Virginians are not getting a safe and effective vaccine that protects against HPV. In 2022, approximately 61% of boys and 64% of girls ages 13-17 in Virginia were up to date on their HPV immunization.<sup>2</sup> HPV immunization rates in Virginia are comparable to rates at the national level; however, we are still falling far short of the **Healthy People 2030** benchmark of 80% HPV vaccination rate for adolescent boys and girls. Geographic disparities persist as well in the U.S. In rural communities, HPV vaccination rates are lower, and the incidence and mortality of HPV-associated cancers are higher.<sup>3</sup>

HPV vaccination is an important public health initiative to protect Virginians against cancer. This is a Call-to-Action to increase HPV vaccination recommendations and initiation of the HPV vaccination at ages 11 to 12, or as early as 9.

## CALL TO ACTION:

- Set your **electronic health record** and pharmacy notifications from age 9 years through 45 years for males and females. Starting at age 9 has been shown to increase vaccine completion by 22 times<sup>4</sup> and immune response is best at ages 9 to 14.
- Make a **strong recommendation for HPV vaccines** for all patients aged 9 years through 26 years. Data shows that your recommendation may improve vaccinations by up to 5 times.<sup>5</sup> The efficacy and immunogenicity of the vaccine has been shown to be best at ages 9 to 14. Vaccination recommendations should be made in all healthcare settings to include acute, non-acute, GYN, dental and pharmacy locations.
- Encourage **same day vaccination** in your facility.
- **Leverage your local pharmacy** to deliver vaccinations. If you are not able to stock vaccines at your facility, e-prescribe/prescribe to the pharmacy. The prescription will activate pharmacy reminder systems which will improve compliance.
- Review your patients who have not completed their 2 or 3 dose series and **proactively recall patients** to your facility or e-prescribe to your local pharmacy to complete the series.
- Provide reminders to those who are not up to date. Identify an **immunization champion** at your facility.
- Implement **standing orders** which can be found at [Vaccine Standing Orders for Healthcare Providers \(immunize.org\)](https://immunize.org).

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/statistics/cases.htm#:~:text=How%20Many%20Cancers%20Are%20Linked%20with%20HPV%20Each%20Year%3F,-Espa%C3%B1ol%20\(Spanish\)&text=Each%20year%20in%20the%20United,about%2037%2C000%20of%20these%20cancers](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/statistics/cases.htm#:~:text=How%20Many%20Cancers%20Are%20Linked%20with%20HPV%20Each%20Year%3F,-Espa%C3%B1ol%20(Spanish)&text=Each%20year%20in%20the%20United,about%2037%2C000%20of%20these%20cancers).

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/coverage/teenavaxview/data-reports/index.html>

<sup>3</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>4</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: PMC9746336.

<sup>5</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.

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The Virginia Department of Health's (VDH) Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program provides free HPV vaccines for all **VFC eligible children**. Most health insurance plans cover the HPV vaccine through age 26. You can learn more about the VFC Program on the [VDH Website](#).

## Please review the resources and links at the end of the letter specifically highlighting:

- ☀ CACV HPV resources for providers, including a step-by-step guide to using the research-tested Announcement Approach for making a strong recommendation for HPV vaccination to parents of adolescents in Virginia
- ☀ American Academy of Pediatrics HPV age 9 toolkit and vaccination site
- ☀ Why the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends initiating HPV vaccine at age 9

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 the HPV vaccination in Virginia.

*Sincerely,*

*Kristina Powell MD, FAAP*

**Kris Powell, MD, FAAP**  
VA-AAP President

*Erin Brickley DO, FAAP*

**Erin Brickley, DO, FAAP**  
VA-AAP Immunization Chair

## Resources

- ◆ Virginia Chapter of the AAP [Immunization Page](#)
- ◆ Cancer Action Coalition of Virginia (CACV) [HPV Resources](#)
- ◆ Virginia Department of Health [HPV vaccination Webpage](#)
- ◆ American Academy of Pediatrics [HPV vaccination patient care webpage](#)
- ◆ Article: [Why the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends initiating HPV vaccine at age 9](#) (tandfonline.com)

