



# How Important is HPV Vaccine for Preteens and Teens? Ask Kristen's Dad.

Our daughter Kristen enjoyed a normal, happy childhood. She was a good student, played rugby, cello and guitar. Her life was filled with promise. She graduated from college with a successful career path before her. Then tragedy struck. She was diagnosed with cervical cancer. Eleven months later she died at the age of 23.

You try to protect your children. You remember the good times. You cherish the memories. You pray it never happens again. It doesn't have to happen. Cervical cancer has one main cause: HPV. That makes it almost 100% preventable. The HPV vaccine could have saved Kristen's life. Protect your children. Vaccinate them.

–Kristen's Dad

Kristen passed away from cervical cancer, a cancer caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a very common virus that spreads by sexual contact. More than half of men and women will get infected with HPV at some point in their life, but most won't know when they have it.

HPV infections can cause cervical cancer in women and penile cancer in men. HPV can also cause throat and mouth cancer, anal cancer, and genital warts in both men and women.

But, you can help **protect** your child from these cancers with the HPV vaccine.

## When should my child get vaccinated?

Girls and boys should start getting the HPV vaccine by age 11 or 12, but teens who haven't yet been vaccinated need it, too. Preteens ages 9-14 usually need two shots. Teens age 15 and older need three shots.

Schedule your child's next shots before leaving the clinic.

If starting the series at ages 9-14:

HPV Shot #1 \_\_\_\_\_  
(Today's date)

HPV Shot #2 \_\_\_\_\_  
(6-12 months after #1)

If starting the series at ages 15 or older:

HPV Shot #1 \_\_\_\_\_  
(Today's date)

HPV Shot #2 \_\_\_\_\_  
(1-2 months after #1)

HPV Shot #3 \_\_\_\_\_  
(4 months after #2)

Your child needs all of the shots for full protection!

## Why is HPV vaccine given at such an early age?

HPV vaccine works much better during the preteen years than when given later. Children who are vaccinated earlier need only two shots instead of three. For these reasons, it's better not to wait.

## Which cancers can HPV vaccine prevent?

The vaccine protects against HPV types that cause:

- cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers in females
- penile cancers in males
- anal and throat cancers in females and males.

## Is HPV vaccine safe?

Yes. HPV vaccine is very safe. Tens of millions of people worldwide have already received HPV vaccines. When side effects occur, they are normally mild, such as pain, redness, or swelling in the arm where the shot was given. Less common side effects can be fever, fainting, headaches, or allergic reactions.

Some preteens and teens may faint after any medical procedure, including receiving vaccines. Talk to your doctor about observing your child seated or lying down for about 15 minutes after they get a shot.

Serious side effects from the HPV vaccine are rare. It is important to tell the doctor or nurse if your child has any severe allergies, including an allergy to yeast.

## How effective is HPV vaccine?

HPV vaccine is very effective in preventing common types of HPV that can lead to cancer.

Rates of HPV infections have greatly dropped in countries where HPV vaccines are given.

## Do women still need Pap tests after getting the HPV vaccine?

Yes. Every woman needs routine Pap tests starting at age 21, because the vaccine doesn't protect against every type of HPV.

## Where can I learn more?

For more information about the HPV vaccine, talk with your child's doctor or nurse. You can also visit: [cdc.gov/vaccines/teens](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens).



"I decided to vaccinate my son against HPV, because the vaccine can prevent boys from spreading the virus and help prevent genital warts and some cancers." — Patrice