Human Papillomavirus (HPV)  
A Parent’s Guide to HPV Vaccination

When should my child get the HPV vaccine?
It is recommended that all boys and girls, ages 11 to 12 years get **two doses** (6-12 months apart) to protect against cancers caused by HPV.

What if my child is older than the recommended age?
Teen boys and girls who did not get vaccinated when they were under 15 years old should get it now. HPV vaccine is recommended for young women through age 26, and young men through age 21 or 26 depending on risk.

Teens and young adults who start the series at ages 15 through 26 years will need **three doses** of HPV vaccine.

What is HPV?
Human papillomavirus or HPV is a common virus, especially among young people. There are more than 100 types of HPV. Most of the time an HPV infection has no signs or symptoms and goes away on its own. However, some types of HPV cause genital warts while others may lead to abnormal cells on the cervix, vulva, vagina, anus, penis, tongue, tonsils and throat, sometimes leading to cancer.

HPV is the most common cause of cervical cancer in women and the most common cause of cancers involving the tongue and tonsils or back of the throat in men.

Did you know?
- HPV can cause many different types of cancer. The HPV vaccine offers long-lasting protection now to prevent cancer later.
- The HPV vaccine works better when given at a younger age because it produces a higher immune response in preteens than older teens.
- The HPV vaccination is much more effective at preventing disease and cancer if administered before first sexual contact.
- Most sexually active people in the United States will get one type of HPV in their lifetime.
How is HPV spread?
HPV is passed from one person to another during skin-to-skin sexual activity, including oral sex.

Can HPV infection be treated?
There is no treatment for HPV. There are treatments for the health problems HPV can cause, such as genital warts, cervical changes, and other cancers. The best way to avoid HPV is to get vaccinated. The HPV vaccine can help protect people from being infected with some of the most common types of the virus.

Is the HPV vaccine safe?
There have been no serious safety concerns linked to the HPV vaccination. Studies continue to show that HPV vaccines are safe. Common, mild side effects include pain and redness in the area of the arm where the shot was given, fever, dizziness, and nausea.

Does it work?
HPV vaccine has been shown to be highly effective against HPV types that cause most cervical cancers and protects against most HPV-associated genital warts. Since the first HPV vaccine was recommended in 2006, there has been a 64 percent reduction in vaccine-type HPV infections among teen girls in the United States. Research has also shown that fewer teens are getting genital warts since the HPV vaccines have been in use. Protection provided by HPV vaccine is long-lasting.

Where can I go for more information?
For more information visit, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/hpv. Or visit www.harvardpilgrim.org click on Health Topics A-Z and search “HPV: Should my child get the vaccine?”

Talk to your health care provider today about protecting your son or daughter from HPV infection!