



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Executive Office of Public Affairs and Equity
Post Office Box 47890
Olympia, Washington 98504-7890

March 3, 2023

Dear Provider,

On January 23rd, 2022, the Washington State Immunization Information System updated the forecast for the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine to recommend initiating the series at age nine years. This change resulted from a recommendation from the Washington Department of Health (DOH) Vaccine Advisory Committee (VAC), which found compelling evidence showing the benefits of initiating the HPV vaccine series at age nine compared to age 11 or 12.

Starting the HPV vaccination series at age nine is recommended by the American Cancer Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics. It is also aligned with the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendation. The HPV vaccine is one of the safest, most effective vaccines available, preventing more than 90% of HPV-attributable cancers.

There are several benefits of beginning HPV vaccination for all children at age nine.

- **The HPV vaccine produces a better immune response when administered earlier.** Pre-teens produce more antibodies after HPV vaccination than older teens. HPV vaccines administered to younger adolescents are safe and provide effective, long-lasting protection from HPV-related cancers¹.
- **Starting at nine allows for more time and opportunities to finish the two-dose series.** If you give the first dose at nine years of age, you should give them the second dose between 6 and 12 months after the first dose¹. Providers can also give the two HPV vaccine doses 12 months apart during well-child visits. Even if an annual visit is skipped, as long as the first dose is initiated before the 15th birthday, only two doses are needed. In Washington, another opportunity to administer that second dose is at age 11 years, when the school entry requirement for one dose of Tdap prompts many families to schedule a well-child visit.
- **The HPV vaccine offers the best protection against HPV infection when administered before exposure to the virus.** According to 2021 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey data, 3 percent of all 8th, 10th, and 12th graders reported having had sexual intercourse by age 13. About 4 percent of 8th graders reported having ever had sexual intercourse, whereas 14 percent of 10th-graders and 37 percent of 12th-graders have ever had sex². HPV can also be transmitted during oral and anal sex.

We are thankful for all the work you do every day for the health of people in Washington, especially as it relates to recommending and administering HPV vaccination. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions and delays in the effort to keep people up to date on their vaccinations. Now is the time to re-focus and get back on track with vaccinations.

Provider Letter concerning HPV Vaccine

March 6, 2023

Page 2 of 2

To prevent more cancer, we urge you to start initiating HPV vaccination at age nine. For more information, visit doh.wa.gov/hpv.

Best,



Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH

Secretary of Health

¹Meites E, Kempe A, Markowitz LE. Use of a 2-Dose Schedule for Human Papillomavirus Vaccination — Updated Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. MMWR 2016;65(49):1405-8.

²Ask Healthy Youth Survey (2021). Healthy Youth Survey Fact Sheet: Sexual Behavior and Orientation for Washington State. Retrieved from [HYS Fact Sheets \(askhys.net\)](https://askhys.net)