

An Ounce of *Prevention:*



**Vaccinate your
children against
the human
papillomavirus
(HPV)**





Human papillomavirus is also called HPV. It is the most common virus spread by skin-to-skin contact during sex. More than half of men and women are infected with HPV at some time in their lives.

How are HPV, cervical cancer, and genital warts related?

HPV causes cervical cancer and genital warts (warts on the penis and vagina). In the U.S., about 10,000 women get cervical cancer every year. About 4,000 die from it. HPV vaccines can prevent cervical cancer by protecting the body from HPV infection.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is especially recommended for girls ages 11 and 12 years to prevent cervical cancer. However, men and women ages 9 to 26 can also get HPV shots.

Why is the HPV vaccine offered at such an early age?

It's recommended at ages 11 and 12 because it works best *before* infection with the virus and before having sex. The vaccine *prevents* HPV infection. It does not cure it. Studies also show that getting HPV shots by age 11 or 12 is when the vaccine most strengthens the body's defenses. That's why it's better not to wait.

Is it helpful to get HPV shots after having sex?

Yes! The vaccine protects against several types of HPV. A sexually active person may not yet be exposed to the certain types of HPV that the vaccine protects against.

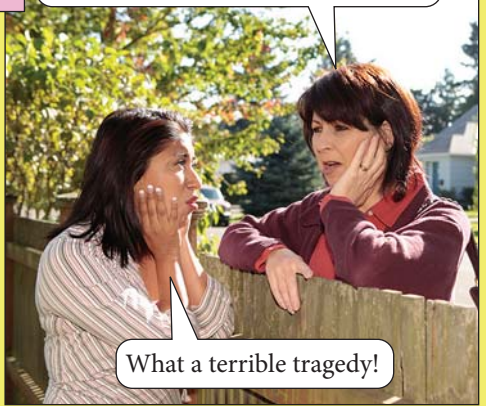
How can I talk to my children about the HPV vaccine and sex?

It can be embarrassing to talk about sex. Most kids hear about it from friends. Even so, your preteens count on *you* for the correct information. Explain that it is best to get the shots before having sex. This will protect them when they get older. Teach your children your values and expectations.

Our story starts when Sarita comes over to Luci's house to give her some bad news...

Yes! They're only 6 and 8 years old!

We just found out that my sister has cervical cancer! She's only 35 years old!



Oh, Sarita, I'm so sorry. Doesn't she have young children?

What a terrible tragedy!

And to think that this could have been prevented!



Prevented?!

Lourdes never had Pap tests, Luci. Having regular Pap tests can catch these problems before they become incurable.

The doctor said that the cancer she has started with human papillomavirus.



I haven't had a Pap test in years!



What is that?



Human papillomavirus, or HPV, is a very common disease that causes some cancers, and you can get it from sex.

The two friends continue their conversation...

Because so many people carry HPV and have no symptoms, it's easy to pass along. Luckily, there's a vaccine for it. You should know about this because you have preteen children.



What do my children have to do with this?

The vaccine is now part of preteen vaccines. Ask your doctor about it next time you take the kids in for their check-ups. My son got vaccinated last year.

I know, Luci, but it's a good idea to give it to them *before* they start having sex. The vaccine prevents HPV. It doesn't cure it.



My children are still so young, though...



I guess you're right. I can have them vaccinated when I take them in for their check-ups. They're due for other vaccines anyway.

There are so many things that we can't control. But this is something easy that we can do to protect our kids.

Abuelo always says, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."



And he's right, Luci. When I think of my sister and how her illness could've been prevented, I want the people I love to be protected.



So this vaccine is for boys too?



Yes, the doctor told me there are two vaccines. One protects against cervical cancer and warts on the penis and vagina. Girls and boys can get it. The other vaccine is just for girls and protects only against cervical cancer.

And you say HPV is what caused the cancer your sister has?



Yes, that's what the doctor told us.

Oh Sarita, this is soooo sad!



You've given me much to think about today, Sarita.



This could happen to my own family.

Meanwhile...



Later that evening...



Sarita says there's a vaccine that protects against the virus that causes cervical cancer.



I think we should get the kids vaccinated.



Oh good, so you agree then? I'm going to make a doctor's appointment for Kati and Luis.



I think we need to take the kids in for their HPV vaccines.



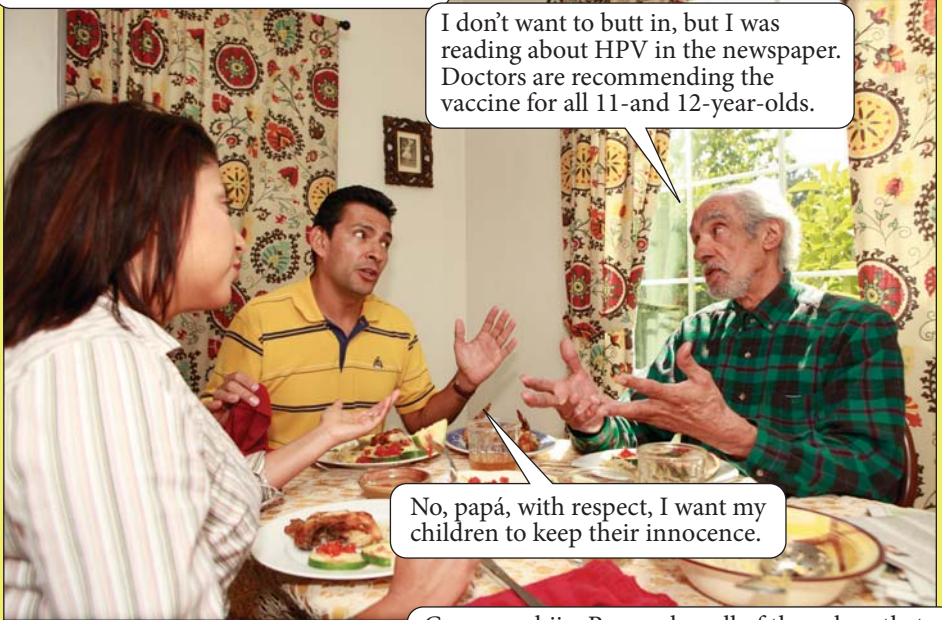
I was talking to Sarita and she's right. It's better to get them vaccinated *before* they even start thinking about sex. Why don't we talk to the doctor?



Wait a minute. Don't you get this virus by having sex? Aren't they a little young?

I don't know about this Luci. I have to think about it.

I don't want to butt in, but I was reading about HPV in the newspaper. Doctors are recommending the vaccine for all 11- and 12-year-olds.



No, papá, with respect, I want my children to keep their innocence.

Come on, hijo. Remember all of the values that we've taught them. They're good and bright kids...

What does innocence have to do with it, hijo?



Well, if we start giving them shots to protect them from diseases they can get from having sex, isn't that giving the wrong message?

But there is no knowing about their future spouse's or sexual partner's sexual history. This vaccine protects them. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

Hi abuelito. Kati and I raced and I won!



You're getting fast, mijo!

You didn't win. I won.

To me, you are both winners. And I see that you wore your helmets. You're smart too!



Abuelo is right, guys. I'm proud of you for wearing your helmets every time you ride!



We got tired of you nagging us all the time.

Very funny, princess. I just want you to be safe.



That's right, honey. It's our job to keep you as healthy and safe as we can.

The next morning...

It's Sarita. She's here for our walk...



She doesn't look very happy.

Good morning, Sarita, would you join us for some breakfast?



I have bad news!

We found out that Lourdes is very sick. We don't think she's going to make it through the week.



Oh no, Sarita.

I just wanted to let you know. I have to go to the hospital.



Hijo, we are a close family. We protect our children and keep them healthy and strong. You have to talk to the doctor about the HPV vaccine.



And to think this could have been prevented.



Hey, I'll race you to the park!



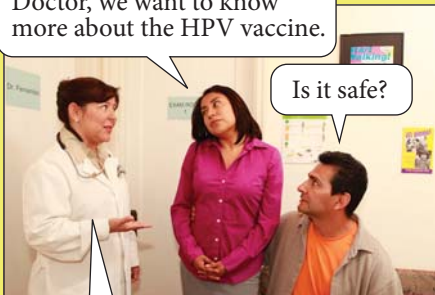
I would never forgive myself if anything bad happened to those two.



The following week, the family goes to the clinic...

Doctor, we want to know more about the HPV vaccine.

Is it safe?



Yes! Millions of people have been vaccinated. The vaccine is very safe and effective. Don't forget, though, when Kati grows up, she will still need routine Pap tests starting at age 21.

And how many shots will we need?



This is the first shot of three, and then you'll be fully protected.

You guys are lucky. Your family takes good care of you.



Don't worry. It didn't hurt that much. Just a little pinch.



You guys are very healthy. You're eating your fruits and veggies and getting your shots. Keep up the good work!



And, I take it you're up to date on your Pap tests?



I have a little extra time. Let's get you into the exam room and take care of it right away.

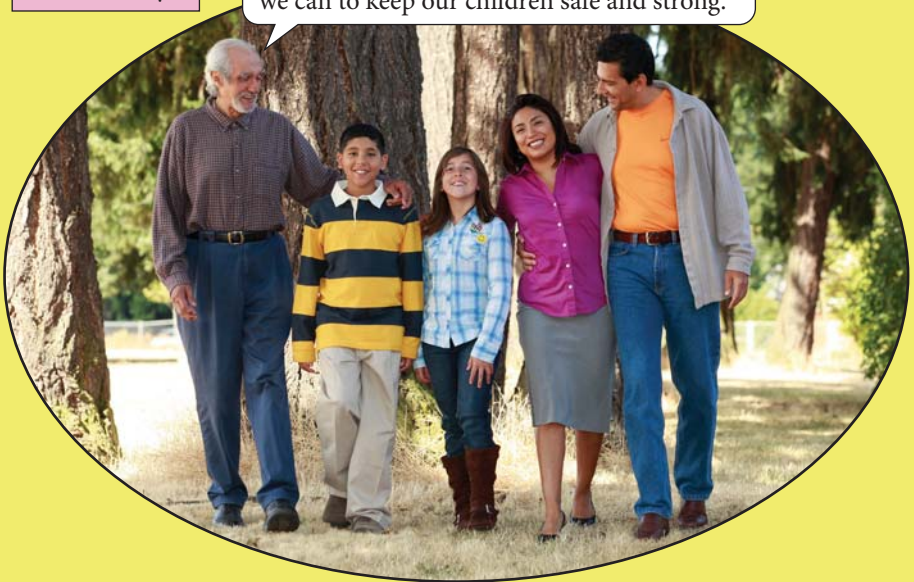


No, doctor, I haven't had one in over five years.

Yes, please Luci. I want you to be healthy and strong too.

Later that day...

I'm so proud of our family! We do everything we can to keep our children safe and strong.



What are HPV vaccine side effects?

The HPV vaccine is given worldwide. Studies show it is very safe. Side effects are mild to moderate and do not last long. Most common are pain, redness, or swelling in the arm where people get the shot. Less common effects can be fever, allergic reactions, headaches, and fainting.

What are the two different HPV vaccines?

They are Gardasil[®] and Cervarix[®]. Both HPV vaccines can prevent cervical cancer and both are for females. Only one, Gardasil[®] is for males and females. It is licensed to protect against cervical cancer, genital warts and anal, vaginal and vulvar cancers.

What if my children do not have health insurance to pay for HPV shots?

The Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) offers free or low-cost shots for eligible children age 18 or younger. If you qualify for Medi-Cal, look for a VFC provider near you at www.eziz.org/pages/vfc_locations2.html. Clinics called “federally qualified health centers” also offer free shots without insurance. Look for these clinics at http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/Search_HCC.aspx. For more information, contact your local health department listed at www.GetImmunizedCA.org, under “Program Information.”

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

Yes! Every woman needs routine Pap tests starting at age 21, even after HPV shots. Find out if you qualify for a free or low-cost exam: call **1-800-511-2300**. Pap tests find HPV infection or cervical cancer early. This can save your life and the lives of those you love. For more information, call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at **1-800-232-4636**.



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