



## GCAPP PARENT TOOLKIT:

# What Your Teens Should Know about HPV and the HPV Vaccination

As teenagers grow, they naturally become more curious about sex, making it important to provide them with accurate, age-appropriate information that supports healthy decision-making. This includes learning about common sexually transmitted infections (STIs)—how they spread, how to prevent them, and what to do if exposed. One of the most common yet less widely recognized STIs in the United States is **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)**.

According to the CDC, as of 2018, there were an estimated **43 million HPV infections** among youth in their late teens and early twenties. Because HPV is often asymptomatic, many people do not realize they have it, which increases the risk of unknowingly spreading the virus. Early education about HPV and prevention strategies, including vaccination, helps teens and young adults make informed choices to protect their health and future.

This tool provides the key facts you need to guide youth in understanding and preventing HPV.

## WHAT IF MY TEEN ALREADY HAS HPV?

- Most people with HPV never know they have it because it usually has no symptoms.
- There is **no test** to determine a person's "HPV status." The only HPV tests available are used in cervical cancer screening for women ages 30 and older.
- There is **no treatment for HPV itself**, but there are treatments for health problems it may cause, such as genital warts and precancerous cervical changes.

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

- Visit the CDC website on HPV and HPV vaccination: <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv>
- Talk with your teen's healthcare provider for personalized guidance.
- For more information on HPV and HPV vaccinations visit: [cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm](https://cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm)

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## WHAT IS HPV?

- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)** is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the United States.
- There are many different types of HPV. Some types cause genital warts, while others can lead to cancers such as cervical, penile, vaginal, anal, and cancers of the throat.
- HPV is **not the same as HIV or herpes (HSV)**.

## HOW IS HPV SPREAD?

- HPV is spread through vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus.
- It can be passed even when the person has **no symptoms**.

## CAN HPV CAUSE CANCER?

- Yes. Certain types of HPV can cause **cervical cancer** and other cancers of the reproductive system.
- It can also cause **oropharyngeal cancers** (cancers in the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils).
- These cancers may take years to develop after someone is infected.

## HOW CAN MY TEEN AVOID OR PREVENT HPV?

- **Vaccination is the best protection.** The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, and protects against the HPV types that cause most cancers and genital warts.
- For women, regular **cervical cancer screening** (Pap tests and/or HPV testing beginning in their 20s) is also important for prevention and early detection.

## WHO SHOULD GET THE HPV VACCINE?

- HPV vaccination is recommended for all preteens (boys and girls) at **ages 11–12**.
- Vaccination is also recommended for **everyone through age 26** if they were not vaccinated earlier.
- Vaccination is **not routinely recommended after age 26**, but some adults ages 27–45 may decide to get the vaccine after consulting their healthcare provider.