

Vaccination can help prevent cancer

As parents, the wellness and safety of our children is always our highest priority. So, what if you could do something today to help protect their future health, and even prevent some types of cancers?

While they are not all preventable, you can achieve greater peace of mind by vaccinating your child against human papillomavirus-related diseases. There is currently a worldwide epidemic of cancers that are now known to be caused by HPV. Although many people have HPV in their bodies and their health is never impacted, some HPV infections can become cancerous. Unfortunately, HPV vaccination rates across the U.S. remain low, even though there is a safe and effective vaccine that can prevent HPV related cancers.

The CDC reports that 87 percent of boys and 58 percent of girls in Louisiana are not vaccinated. The agency also says that 30,000 cancers in the United States could be prevented if more people received the vaccine. This striking number helps hit home the importance of HPV vaccination, especially when you

consider the potential lives saved. This is why we are joining with National Cancer Institute-designated Cancer Centers across the country in urging parents to vaccinate their children against HPV. Boys and girls should begin the HPV vaccine series at age 11 or 12 when they receive the vaccines that help prevent meningitis, whooping cough and tetanus.

Even if your child is older, it's not too late. Women can be vaccinated through age 26 and men through age 21. We hope all parents will choose this option for their children, as studies continue to prove the effectiveness of the HPV vaccine in decreasing infections and HPV cancers in young people. Please discuss the benefits of HPV vaccination with your pediatrician; together, you can determine if the vaccine is right for your child.

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