



*Caring for the  
Next Generation*

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Dear Parent,

Beginning at your child's 11 year checkup, I hope to discuss with you a vaccine against cancer. Gardasil® and Cervarix® vaccines are the only approved vaccines in the US for protecting girls and boys from the human papilloma virus (HPV). CDC data shows that over 26,000 cases of cancer each year are caused by HPV. I believe there are compelling reasons to consider vaccinating your daughter or son against the human papilloma virus (HPV). And the reasons I want you to consider at such an early age may surprise you.

#### About the Girls:

By now, many of you are aware of the vaccine and its protective effects for girls. 79 million Americans (mainly teens and young adults) have been infected with HPV in their lifetime. It is by far the most common sexually transmitted disease in the country. About 10,300 of those American females are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year. >90% of all cervical cancers are caused by HPV. While there are many types of HPV, there are two strands that the HPV vaccine protects against that causes 70% of the cervical cancers in the US (HPV Serotype 16 and 18). HPV also causes genital warts, mouth cancers and anal cancers in women. But HPV is most notorious for causing cervical cancer, nearly 10,000 new cases a year.

#### About the Boys:

Now boys are not immune from the effects of HPV. Somewhere around 8,000 men a year develop cancer from HPV. The FDA has approved the HPV vaccine for males to prevent genital warts and genital/anal cancers. They also urge vaccinating males to reduce transmission to females. These are good reasons alone. However, I feel the most compelling reason you should vaccinate your son is due to the thousands of men each year who are diagnosed with mouth and throat cancers due to HPV. There has been a dramatic rise in mouth and throat cancers in the last 10 years, largely attributed to HPV. The Gardasil® vaccine is not yet officially approved for the prevention of oral cancers, but I am confident that these vaccines will prevent the majority of the 6,700 cases a year of mouth and throat cancers.

#### About transmission:

As I researched transmission of HPV, there were some challenging facts that I came across. HPV is transmitted by "mucus membrane contact". Most people assume this is defined as sexual intercourse, which it can be. However it also includes oral-genital



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contact. Some research indicates that HPV is also transmitted via mouth to mouth prolonged kissing.

Now you should be told that 90% of HPV infections self-resolve in about 2 years. And of the 100+ types of HPV, only a handful are known to cause cancer. So even if your teenager happens to contract HPV, chances are it won't turn to cancer. But for some of them, it will. That is why you need to determine whether or not to give your child the vaccine.

### Why NOW?

As a parent the temptation is to say "it's way too early to be thinking about these things." Honestly, for a lot of reasons, you are right. Most of my patients are making good decisions and are not subjected to the sexual exposures that many of other youth in this country are. However, there are two things to remember. First, studies continue to show that most parents are not accurate in predicting their child's first sexual experience. The vaccine can't be given too early, but it can be given too late. And secondly: immune responses are significantly higher in patients from 11-15 years of age compared to 16-20 years old. Higher responses may mean better protection for your child, for longer. The data shows 10 years of excellent cancer prevention, and we anticipate it may last much longer (pending further studies).

### About safety:

I have talked with many of you about safety. And I must be honest that we don't have 40+ years of experience with this vaccine (we have about 15 years). But we do have 40+ years of experience with very similar vaccines, and of tracking vaccine side effects. The most common side effects of the 40 million doses to date are soreness, pain at the injection site, and fainting after the shot. I have personally given hundreds of doses and completely agree with those side effects, and nothing more. While I can't tell you definitively what the long term data shows, I can tell you this. I will give it to my children when they turn 11 years old, without hesitation. As a parent, I want my kids to be protected. Three shots to protect them from lost fertility, lost ability to speak, or lost life gives me peace of mind. Much more than my fears of side effects.

Ultimately decision is yours. I hope you will bring your questions and concerns to me as we tackle this and many other challenges of adolescence. I hope to see you soon at our next well checkup!

Committed to your family and mine,

Joshua Tardy, MD