

# HPV Cancer Prevention

## *A parent's guide to the HPV vaccine for your preteen*

The American Indian Cancer Foundation asked parents what they need to know about the HPV vaccine. We listened, and want to give you the best information to help make the right choice for your child.

### **Why does my child need the HPV vaccine? Is it necessary?**

Cancer is a leading cause of death for American Indians. By getting the HPV vaccine for your child, you can protect them from common HPV cancers, which include cervical, anal, penile, vaginal, and some throat cancers. American Indians are at higher risk for many of the HPV cancers. In some regions, American Indians are four times more likely to get cervical cancer, the most common HPV cancer.

### **What is the best age to get the vaccine?**

The vaccine is most effective for children ages 11-12. A child can get the vaccine at age 9. It's possible to get the vaccine after age 12, up to age 26, but it is not as effective. Getting the vaccine now, when it is most effective, will protect your child from cancers later in life.

### **What is HPV, and what does it have to do with cancer?**

HPV is a common infection that can lead to several types of cancers. HPV is passed from skin-to-skin, usually during sex. Almost all people will come into contact with HPV in their lives. It is important to get the vaccine before coming into contact with HPV, which can turn into cancer.

### **Is it for boys and girls?**

Yes. Both males and females can get throat and anal cancers from HPV. Men can also get penile cancer. Women can also get cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers.

### **Is it safe?**

Yes. There have been 57 million doses of the HPV vaccine given, with zero serious safety concerns.

### **Does it actually prevent cancer?**

Yes. HPV causes 99.9% of cervical cancers and the majority of other HPV cancers. The vaccine prevents the types of HPV that cause 90% of these cancers.

### **How can I get the vaccine?**

Talk to your doctor about the HPV vaccine, even if they don't bring it up. The vaccine is free for all American Indians through the Vaccines for Children program.

