



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP  
State Health Commissioner

*Department of Health*  
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RICHMOND, VA 23218

TTY 7-1-1 OR  
1-800-828-1120

Dear Parents of Rising Sixth Grade Girls:

The 2007 Virginia General Assembly passed a law that requires the Virginia Department of Health to provide the parents of rising sixth grade girls with information on Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and the Human Papillomavirus Vaccine. Some strains of HPV cause cervical cancer in women. The HPV vaccine is the first vaccine developed to prevent most cervical cancers. The vaccine targets the strains of HPV that most commonly cause cervical cancer and is highly effective in preventing infection with these types of HPV in young women who have not been exposed to them before getting the vaccine.

After reviewing the information provided on the reverse side of this letter, please contact your health care provider to determine if your child should receive the vaccine series. HPV vaccine is available from your doctor, military clinics, or the local health department. Whether or not you decide to have your daughter vaccinated, you may provide documentation to your child's school and they will update your child's school immunization record.

Should you have additional questions, please contact Dr. Sandra Sommer, Division of Immunization, Virginia Department of Health, by telephone at 804-864-8055, or by email at [Sandra.sommer@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Sandra.sommer@vdh.virginia.gov) or Tia Campbell, Office of Student Services, Virginia Department of Education, by telephone at 804-786-8671, or by email at [Tia.campbell@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Tia.campbell@doe.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Karen Remley".

Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP  
State Health Commissioner

## Facts for Parents of Rising 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls about HPV and the HPV Vaccine\*

### What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is a common virus that is spread through sexual contact. Most of the time HPV has no symptoms, so people do not know they have it. There are many different strains or types of HPV. Some types can cause cervical cancer in women. Other types of HPV can cause genital warts in both males and females.

In most people, HPV goes away on its own and does not cause health problems. Experts do not know why HPV goes away in some cases, but not in others.

### How common is HPV?

About 20 million people in the U.S. are currently infected with HPV. Each year, another 6.2 million people get a new HPV infection. HPV is most common in young people who are in their late teens and early 20s.

### How common is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of cancer deaths among women around the world. In the U.S., about 10,000 women get cervical cancer every year and about 4,000 are expected to die from it.

### What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is the first vaccine developed to prevent most cervical cancers, and genital warts. It works by protecting against the types of HPV that most commonly cause these conditions.

There are two brands of vaccine that can be given to prevent HPV. Talk with your healthcare provider about which vaccine is best for your daughter.

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For more information, ask your child's healthcare provider or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)  
Website: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/preteen/](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/preteen/)

### Who should get the HPV vaccine?

Doctors recommend this vaccine for 11 and 12 year old girls. Ideally, girls should get this vaccine before their first sexual contact when they could be exposed to the HPV types covered by the vaccine. It does not work as well for those who were exposed to the virus before getting the vaccine.

### Is the HPV vaccine effective?

This vaccine targets the types of HPV that most commonly cause cervical cancer and genital warts. This vaccine is highly effective in preventing these types of HPV in young women who have not been exposed to them before getting the vaccine. The vaccine does not treat existing HPV infections or the diseases they may cause.

### Is the HPV vaccine safe?

The HPV vaccines have been used in the U.S. and around the world for several years and have been very safe. The most common side effect is soreness in the arm where the shot is given. Other reactions may include fever, headache or fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain, or muscle or joint pain.

Brief fainting spells and related symptoms (such as jerking movements) can happen after any medical procedure, including vaccination. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes after a vaccination can help prevent fainting and injuries caused by falls.

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\*Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): "Facts for Parents of Pre-Teen Girls about HPV and the HPV Vaccine" AND HPV Vaccine Information Statements (3/30/2010)