



HPV Case Studies: Talking to parents about the HPV vaccine

Read the following scenarios. Write down what you would say to the parent in each of these situations.

a. Safety concern:

Parent: *"My child is very healthy. I only take them to the doctor for well-being check-ups since they rarely get sick. If I vaccinate them, I am worried they might get the HPV virus. Also, I heard that the vaccine causes infertility and I want them to be able to have kids when they are older."*

Your response:

b. Sexual initiation:

Parent: *"I don't think I want to vaccinate my child. After all, they are only 12. They have not had sex and won't until getting married. Vaccinating my child might give the wrong idea that they can start having sex."*

Your response:

c. Vaccinating boys:

Parent: *Can I get my son vaccinated?*

Your response:

d. Paying for the vaccine:

Parent: "I want to vaccinate my child but I don't have health insurance. How can I pay for the vaccine?"

Your response:

e. Child is already sexually active

Parent: "My child is already sexually active – can they still be vaccinated?"

Your response:

f. Infected with another STI

Parent: "My child has a sexually transmitted infection. Can they still be vaccinated?"

Your response:



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a. Safety concern:

Parent: “My child is very healthy. I only take them to the doctor for well-being check-ups since they rarely get sick. If I vaccinate them, I am worried they might get the HPV virus. Also, I heard that the vaccine causes infertility and I want them to be able to have kids when they are older.”

Suggested response: The HPV vaccine is safe. It does not contain the virus and will not make your child sick. Just like with other vaccines, some people may have mild side effects from the vaccine like pain or swelling in the arm the shot was given – this is normal and will go away in a day or two. The vaccine will not make your child infertile or stop them from having children in the future. What the vaccine will do is protect them against HPV infections which can cause cancer.

b. Sexual initiation:

Parent: “I don’t think I want to vaccinate my child. After all, they are only 12. They have not had sex and won’t until getting married. Vaccinating my child might give the wrong idea that they can start having sex.”

Suggested response: I understand that your child is not sexually active and will not be anytime soon. I also know that you want to protect them. If you vaccinate now, your child will be protected against the HPV virus well before they become sexually active. Studies tell us that getting the HPV vaccine does not make kids more likely to start having sex. I recommend you talk soon with your child’s doctor about vaccinating them as soon as possible.

c. Vaccinating boys:

Parent: Can I get my son vaccinated?

Suggested response: Yes! Just like girls, boys should be vaccinated. HPV vaccination helps prevent infections that can lead to cancers of the penis, anus, and back of the throat. All boys aged 11 and 12 years should be vaccinated. If your son is older he can still get vaccinated up to the age of 26. I recommend you talk soon with your child’s doctor about vaccinating your son as soon as possible.

d. Paying for the vaccine:

Parent: “I want to vaccinate my child but I don’t have health insurance. How can I pay for the vaccine?”

Suggested response: The HPV vaccine is covered by some health insurance plans. If your health insurance plan does not cover the vaccine or if you don’t have insurance, there are programs to help pay for the HPV vaccine including the Texas Vaccines for Children Program. This program is available to children aged 18 years and under who are eligible for Medicaid, are uninsured or are underinsured.

e. Already sexually active

Parent: “My child is already sexually active – can they still be vaccinated?”

Suggested response: Yes, it is important to vaccinate your child even if they have already started having sex. The vaccine can still protect them from HPV types they have not been exposed to. People between the ages of 9-26 can get vaccinated. I encourage you to talk to a medical provider about having your child vaccinated against (and assessed for risk of other STIs) as soon as possible.

f. Infected with another sexually transmitted infection (STI)

Parent: “My child has an STI. Can they still be vaccinated?”

Suggested response: Yes. People who have an STI can be vaccinated against HPV. It would be good to mention this to your healthcare provider when asking for the vaccine. If you want I can help you write down the questions you have. This way you won’t forget when you talk to your provider.