



NEWS

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New Campaign Highlights Vaccine Against Cancer

County aims to educate parents on benefits of HPV vaccine around back-to-school season

San Mateo, Calif. – Although 98% of San Mateo County kids and teens are vaccinated against diseases including measles, mumps and polio, San Mateo County Health System officials estimate that fewer than 50% are vaccinated against human papillomavirus (HPV).

The HPV vaccine prevents against cancers caused by the HPV virus. Nearly 80 million people—about one in four—are currently infected with HPV in the United States. Certain types of HPV infection can cause cervical and other cancers. About a third of all women who develop cervical cancer will die from the disease.

A new County campaign urges parents of pre-teens and teens to protect their children with three doses of the HPV vaccine. The HPV vaccine is recommended for preteen boys and girls ages 11-12 so they are protected before being exposed to the virus. But it's also not too late for older teens that missed getting vaccinated when they were younger to catch up.

“The HPV vaccine is a vaccine against cancer,” said San Mateo County Health Officer Dr. Scott Morrow. “The HPV vaccine is another back-to-school essential. Call your child’s doctor and make sure your kids get all three doses, ideally by the time they turn 13.”

In addition to protecting against cervical cancer, the vaccine protects against types of HPV that cause throat, anal, and penile cancers in men. Young women can get the HPV vaccine through age 26, and young men can get vaccinated through age 21. The vaccine is also recommended for any man who has sex with men through age 26, and for men with compromised immune systems (including HIV) through age 26.

Vaccines go through rigorous testing—more than any medicine— to ensure they are safe. More than 80 million doses of HPV vaccine have been given since 2006. Research shows that the benefits of the vaccine greatly outweigh the risks. In fact, a major study showed that since the vaccine was introduced in 2006, the kind of HPV that the vaccine protects against decreased 56% among women 14-19.

To get vaccinated, residents should call their child’s doctor or visit one of several local [clinics](#). For more information, visit smchealth.org/hpv.

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