The American Cancer Society Encourages Parents to Reschedule Missed Vaccine Visits for Kids

Coronavirus threatens to slow progress against cancer prevention

ATLANTA, May 3, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- In an effort to boost public health and help keep vaccinations on track in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, the American Cancer Society continues efforts around *Mission: HPV Cancer Free*, a campaign to eliminate HPV cancers as a public health problem, starting with cervical cancer.

The ongoing pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for healthcare providers, patients, and policymakers. Data indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic is having a negative effect on vaccination rates. Many parents have postponed pediatrician visits in order to avoid transmission of the virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that HPV vaccinations are down by more than 20% or more than 1 million doses in the public sector alone, compared to 2019.

Adding to the challenge is the expected availability of the COVID-19 vaccine for adolescents. It is predicted that the COVID-19 vaccine will be available for children as young as 12 years old early this summer. If approved, adolescents who get the vaccine will have a seven to eight-week period when they cannot receive other vaccines before, during, or after the COVID-19 protocol. This could impact the number of adolescents who will get their HPV vaccination on time this year. It's important for parents, in consultation with their pediatricians, to reschedule any missed vaccinations now.

"COVID-19 has reversed some of the gains in HPV vaccination uptake that we've worked so hard to make over the years. It's critical that we act quickly to protect the national investment in HPV vaccination to protect against these 6 types of cancer," said Debbie Saslow, PhD., managing director, HPV & GYN Cancers for the American Cancer Society.

HPV or human papillomavirus is a common virus that can cause six types of cancer. About 14 million people in the United States become infected with HPV each year. Eight out of ten people will get HPV at some point in their lifetime. Most infections become undetectable, but some can go on to cause cancer.

HPV vaccination works best when given between ages 9 and 12. Vaccination at the recommended ages will prevent more cancers than vaccination at older ages. Children and young adults age 13 through 26 who have not been vaccinated, or who haven't gotten all their doses, should get the vaccine as soon as possible. Both boys and girls can get infected with HPV. HPV vaccination helps protect boys from cancers of the throat, penis, and anus later in life. HPV vaccination helps protect girls from cancers of the cervix, throat, vagina, vulva, and anus later in life

The goal of *Mission: HPV Cancer Free* is to reach a vaccination rate of 80% of 13-year-olds in the United States by 2026.

SOURCE American Cancer Society

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