American Cancer Society Launches Campaign to Eliminate Cervical Cancer

Mission: HPV Cancer Free aims to increase vaccination rates among boys and girls to 80%

The American Cancer Society (ACS) is committing to work towards eliminating cervical cancer in the United States in the next 40 years by increasing HPV vaccination rates and continued screening. To this end, ACS is launching Mission: HPV Cancer Free, a public health campaign to eliminate vaccine-preventable HPV cancers, starting with cervical cancer. The goal of the campaign is to have 80 percent of 13-year-old boys and girls in the US fully vaccinated with HPV vaccine by 2026—20 years after introduction of the first HPV vaccine.

> *"We have a historic opportunity and all we have to do is make sure the children in our lives are vaccinated and the women in our lives are screened."*

About 14 million people, including teens, become infected with the human papillomavirus (HPV) each year. An estimated 80 percent of people will get HPV during their lives. While most HPV infections go away on their own without lasting health problems, there is no way to know if an infection will lead to cancer. HPV infection is known to cause six different types of cancer: cervical, vaginal, vulvar, anal, penile, and throat cancers.

Each year in the US, about 31,500 men and women in the US are diagnosed with a cancer caused by HPV. There is no treatment for HPV infection, but vaccination and screening can prevent most HPV-related cancers.

"If we can achieve sustained 80% HPV vaccination in pre-teen boys and girls, combined with continued screening and treatment for cervical pre-cancers, we could see the elimination of cervical cancer in the US within 40 years," said Richard C. Wender, M.D., chief cancer control officer for the American Cancer Society. "No cancer has been eliminated yet, but we believe if these conditions are met, the elimination of cervical cancer is a very real possibility."

The Mission: HPV Cancer Free campaign will build on the American Cancer Society's extensive HPV vaccination work and will engage a national coalition of health care providers, federal and state government, and other public and private entities to increase the availability and utilization of HPV vaccine.

The American Cancer Society recommends that the 2-shot HPV vaccine series is best given to boys and girls at ages 11 or 12. HPV vaccination prevents an estimated 90% of HPV cancers when given at the recommended age, but cancer protection decreases as age at vaccination increases. "The American Cancer Society is determined to protect the future of every boy and girl by preventing six types of cancer with the HPV vaccine," said Debbie Saslow, PhD, senior director of HPV and women's cancers for the American Cancer Society. "We have a historic opportunity and all we have to do is make sure the children in our lives are vaccinated and the women in our lives are screened."

Additional information about HPV-related cancers and ACS's work to reduce them can be found at cancer.org/HPV.

UPDATE June 7, 2018: The National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated cancer centers have endorsed the goal of eliminating cancers caused by HPV through gender-neutral HPV vaccination and evidence-based cancer screening.

ACS Elimination Statement on HPV Cancers
Statement from the ACS on Eliminating HPV Cancers (278 KB)