

News Highlights

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UH CANCER CENTER, HAWAI'I DOH, JABSOM AND NATION'S CANCER CENTERS JOINTLY ENDORSE UPDATED HPV VACCINE RECOMMENDATIONS

Statement urges action to increase national vaccination rates

HONOLULU – Recognizing a critical need to improve national vaccination rates for the human papillomavirus (HPV), the University of Hawai'i Cancer Center, John A. Burns School of Medicine, and Hawai'i Department of Health have united with each of the 69 [National Cancer Institute](#) (NCI)-designated cancer centers in issuing a joint statement in support of recently revised recommendations from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

"The Cancer Center is proud to join with all of the NCI-designated centers and other health organizations to bring awareness about the HPV vaccine," said Dr. Randall Holcombe, director of the UH Cancer Center. "There are more than 100 people affected with HPV-associated cancers each year in Hawai'i. The vaccine is an effective strategy for combatting these cancers, so it is important to work to increase HPV vaccination rates in our communities."

According to the CDC, incidence rates of HPV-associated cancers have continued to rise, with approximately 39,000 new HPV-associated cancers now diagnosed each year in the United States. Although HPV vaccines can prevent the majority of cervical, anal, oropharyngeal (back of the throat) and other genital cancers, vaccination rates remain low across the U.S., with just 41.9 percent of girls and 28.1 percent of boys completing the recommended vaccine series.

"Our research at the UH Cancer Center has affirmed that HPV contributes to genital, anal, and other cancers in Hawai'i. In fact, over the past 10 years, new anal cancers in women have increased by 3 percent each year," said Dr. Brenda Hernandez, associate researcher in the UH Cancer Center's Epidemiology Program. "HPV vaccination is a powerful tool to prevent these cancers."

NEW HPV GUIDELINES

The new guidelines from the CDC recommend that beginning at ages 11 to 12, children should receive two doses of the HPV vaccine at least six months apart. The vaccine works better when given to this age group. Adolescents and young adults older than 15 should continue to complete the three-dose series.

"The revised recommendation of 2 doses for middle school aged children should significantly reduce barriers and could be easily worked into the routine well-child visits for 11-13 year olds," said Dr. Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, professor of Family Medicine at the John A. Burns School of Medicine.

HPV IN HAWAII

Hawaii's percentage of 13 to 17 year old women and men receiving at least 2 doses of HPV vaccine has increased to 64 percent and 49 percent, respectively. However, these numbers still fall short of the Healthy People 2020 goal of 80 percent of women and men receiving the HPV vaccine by age 15 according to the latest National Immunization Survey-Teen.

"The Hawai'i Department of Health supports the new guidelines for HPV vaccination and urges physicians to talk with parents about the vaccine," said Dr. Virginia Pressler, director of the Hawai'i State Department of Health. "With this year's start of new physical exam requirements for all Hawai'i students entering the seventh grade, physicians have an excellent opportunity to catch preteens who have not yet received the HPV vaccination."

VACCINATION RATE BARRIERS

Research shows there are a number of barriers to overcome to improve vaccination rates, including a lack of strong recommendations from physicians and parents not understanding that this vaccine protects against several types of cancer.

In an effort to overcome these barriers, NCI-designated cancer centers have organized a continuing series of national summits to share new research, discuss best practices, and identify collective action toward improving vaccination rates. There will also be a Talking Cancer Prevention and HPV Vaccination: Workshop for Health Care Providers held on February 9, 2017 at the UH Cancer Center.

"We have been inspired by the White House Cancer Moonshot to work together in eliminating cancer," said Dr. Electra Paskett, associate director of The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC – James) Cancer Control Research Program. "Improving HPV vaccination is an example of an evidence-based prevention strategy we can implement today to save thousands of lives in the future."

For more information, you can check out the [2017 HPV Consensus Statement](#)