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Watseka – Protect Your Preteens Today from HPV Cancers Tomorrow

HPV vaccination is recommended for preteen girls and boys at age 11 to 12. If your son or daughter hasn't started or finished the HPV vaccine series yet, it's not too late!

HPV is short for human papillomavirus. According to the CDC, there are about 17,500 women and 9,300 men affected by HPV-related cancers each year. In both women and men HPV can cause anal cancer and mouth/throat (oropharyngeal) cancer. It can also cause cancers of the cervix, vulva and vagina in women, and cancer of the penis in men. Most of the HPV infections that cause these cancers could be prevented with vaccination.

The HPV vaccine has a very good safety record. Nearly 90 million doses have been distributed in the US since the vaccine was introduced, and no serious safety concerns have been linked to HPV vaccination. Possible side effects after HPV vaccination are generally mild and go away quickly, such as pain, redness, or swelling in the arm where the shot was given.

Jacquelyn, a real-life mother of two and cervical cancer survivor, shares her story: "When I got a Pap test after my son was born, I found out I had cancer and needed a total hysterectomy. My husband and I have been together for 15 years and we were planning to have more children. We are so grateful for our two wonderful children, but we were hoping for more – which is not going to happen now. Although they caught the cancer early, I still have medical issues, taking time away from my family, friends and my job. Worse, every time the doctor calls, I hold my breath until I get the results. Cancer is always in the back of my mind. I will protect my son and daughter by getting them both the HPV vaccine as soon as they turn 11. I tell everyone to get the HPV vaccine series to protect them from cancer."

The HPV vaccine is recommended for preteen boys and girls so they can be protected **before** ever being exposed to the virus. The vaccine offers the best protection to girls and boys who receive the entire series and have time to develop an immune response **before** they begin sexual activity with another person. HPV vaccination is a series of three shots given over several months.

The Iroquois County Public Health Department in Watseka offers the HPV vaccines for boys through age 21 and girls through age 26. Please contact the health department at 815-432-2483 for more information or to schedule an appointment. More information is also available on CDC's Vaccines for Preteens and Teens website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens.