

More U.S. teens getting vaccinated against HPV

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(HealthDay)—Six out of 10 U.S. parents are choosing to get their children vaccinated against the cancer-causing human papillomavirus (HPV), which is spread by sexual contact, federal health officials reported Thursday.

The bad news: while most children are getting their first dose of HPV vaccine, many aren't completing the full vaccination schedule, the officials said.

"I'm pleased with the progress, but too many teens are still not receiving the HPV vaccine—which leaves them vulnerable to cancers caused by HPV infection," CDC director Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald said in an agency news release. "We need to do more to increase the vaccination rate and protect American youth today from future cancers tomorrow."

An estimated 14 million Americans, including teens, become infected with HPV each year. The infection can cause cervical, vaginal and vulvar cancers in women, and penile cancer in men. It can also cause anal cancer, throat cancer and [genital warts](#) in both men and women, according to the CDC.

The CDC recommends two doses of HPV vaccine for children at ages 11 or 12. Teens who get the first vaccine dose before their 15th birthday need two doses to be protected. Teens and young adults who start the vaccine series between ages 15 through 26 need three doses, according to the agency.

In its new report, the CDC said 60 percent of teens aged 13 to 17 received one or more doses of HPV vaccine in 2016—an increase of 4 percentage points from 2015.

And the report found that HPV vaccination is becoming more common among boys. An estimated 65 percent of girls received their first dose of HPV vaccine in 2016, compared to 56 percent of boys. That represents a 6 percentage point increase for boys from 2015. Rates for girls were about the same as 2015, the CDC said.

But agency officials said they're concerned because, while most teens have received the first dose of HPV vaccine, only 43 percent are up to date on all recommended doses. Vaccination rates tend to be lower in rural and less urban areas compared to more urban areas, the CDC said.

"Recent changes to the vaccine recommendations mean preventing [cancer](#) is easier now than ever before," said Dr. Nancy Messonnier, who directs the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. "Now is the time for parents to protect their children from cancers caused by HPV."

Latest statistics show that HPV vaccination has led to significant drops in HPV infections: HPV-related cancers and genital warts have decreased by 71 percent among teen girls and 61 percent among young women, the CDC said.

The CDC findings were published in the Aug. 25 issue of the agency's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Dr. Lois Ramondetta is a professor of gynecologic oncology and reproductive medicine at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

She said the new CDC report shows that education and outreach efforts to parents about the HPV vaccine are working, with [vaccination rates](#) moving in the right direction, albeit slowly.

Ramondetta said it's also encouraging to see that the vaccination gap between boys and girls is shrinking.

"However, the data also show that we have a long way to go, particularly with children completing the vaccine series," she added. "It is concerning that more parents and physicians aren't taking advantage of this safe and effective [vaccine](#) to prevent several cancers in their children. I recently vaccinated my own daughter, and I'm thankful to have the opportunity to protect her in this way."

More information: Aug. 24, 2017, news release, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Lois Ramondetta, M.D., professor of gynecologic oncology and reproductive medicine, University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston

To learn more about the HPV vaccine, visit the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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