



Global HPV  
Communication

# Field Guide

HPV Demand Promotion Job Aid

unicef 

## Communicating with Parents and Teens about HPV Vaccine Tips for Health Workers

### Step 1 - Greet:

Greet everyone according to their cultural traditions. Introduce yourself, what you do, and the purpose of your visit.

### Step 2 - Ask:

Ask questions about the daughter i.e., girl's general health, age, vaccination status, and any allergies or illnesses. Listen carefully and allow parents and caregivers to talk about their concerns. Use this step to start a discussion about the HPV vaccine.

### Step 3 - Tell:

Provide information that will help parents and girls make an informed decision about getting the HPV vaccine. For example, you could tell parents about the safety record of the vaccine. Or, you could talk about why it is important for girls to be vaccinated between 9 and 14. You could also tell parents that the vaccine is certified halal. What you tell parents should be dependent upon what you hear when you ask questions.

### Step 4 - Help in the decision-making process:

Parents and girls need support and encouragement, not just information. The decision needs to be their own, but you can assist them by helping them weigh the alternatives. Clarify any false rumours or misconceptions. Discuss the risks and benefits of the HPV vaccine.

### Step 5 - Explain:

Explain that the HPV vaccine prevents cervical cancer and is safe and effective. Explain the process for completing the vaccination according to the national immunization schedule.

### Step 6 - Repeat:

Before the parents and girls move on, make sure to schedule the next appointment for the second dose of the vaccine. Check in about whether they are comfortable with their decision. Being consistent and available builds trust between you and the patient.



**Step 1 Example:**

“Hi, my name is...I’m a volunteer health worker and I’m visiting homes in your area to talk to parents and their daughters about a vaccine that can prevent cancer. How are you?”

**Step 2 Example:**

“Are there any health concerns that are affecting you or your family right now?”  
“Have you or your children ever been vaccinated against any diseases, like polio or measles?”  
“Have you ever heard of HPV, or the HPV vaccine?”

**Step 3 Example:**

“The HPV vaccine should be given to girls before they are exposed to the virus. The best time for them to receive the vaccine is when they are between 9 and 14, but older girls can also receive the vaccine.” “The HPV vaccine protects girls against HPV infection. Studies on the vaccine show that it is highly effective at preventing cervical cancer.”

**Step 4 Example:**

“Getting the vaccine will protect your daughter from HPV infection, and this means that she will be protected from cervical cancer in the future.” “Receiving the HPV vaccine does not mean that a girl will engage in sex before marriage.” “The HPV vaccine is prepared according to religious law and is halal.” “Every vaccine has some minor side effects, like redness, swelling, or mild fever. These usually go away within a day.”

**Step 5 Example:**

“If you’re ready to bring your daughter for vaccination, there are a couple things you should know. First, she will need two [or three] doses (depending on age and country immunization schedule). So be sure to schedule a follow up visit (in xx months) if aged 9 to 14, if aged 15 and above (schedule in xx months’ time) from now. Second, remember that any vaccine usually has some mild side effects. If these don’t go away within a day or two, come back to the clinic for a checkup.”

**Step 6 Example:**

“Let’s schedule another appointment. You’re always welcome to visit the clinic, but let’s be sure we plan on a follow-up visit.” “Are you comfortable with the decision you’ve made about the HPV vaccine? Is there anything else I can tell you about or concerns I can address?”

## Facts About HPV Vaccination and Cervical Cancer Prevention

*Key Facts – You may find these useful in discussions with parents/caregivers and girls about HPV, the HPV vaccine, and cervical cancer*

- Cervical cancer can be prevented through HPV vaccination of girls, and cervical cancer screening and treatment of women.
- HPV vaccine is highly effective at preventing HPV infections, precancerous lesions, and most forms of cervical cancer.<sup>1</sup>
- By 2022, over 130 countries had introduced HPV vaccines into national immunization programs.<sup>2</sup>
- Governments in many countries offer HPV vaccine free of charge through immunization programs.
- The vaccine is most effective if administered to girls before exposure to HPV that occurs with sexual debut. WHO recommends girls aged 9 to 14 years old as the primary cohort for vaccination with a one or two dose schedule.<sup>3</sup>
- For girls aged 15 or older, or those with a compromised immune system, three doses within 12 to 15 months are recommended (typically given at 0, 2, and 6 months; but the second dose can be given at up to 6 months after the first dose).
- HPV vaccines are safe, effective and reliable. WHO Advisory Committee for Vaccine Safety has closely monitored the safety of HPV vaccines reviewing data and studies from all over the world. A WHO 2017 review of over 270 million doses of HPV vaccine concluded the vaccine has an excellent safety profile and no major adverse events.
- HPV vaccine is delivered with an auto-disposable (AD) syringe that is used only once and then must be safely disposed.
- HPV vaccine does not impact fertility or promote promiscuity. It is a vaccine that protects against cervical cancer. Studies show that girls who have received the HPV vaccine do not start having sex sooner and do not have more sexual partners than girls who do not get the vaccine.
- Like all other vaccines, the HPV vaccine can produce mild side effects, such as redness, swelling or soreness in the arm where the injection is given. Some people also experience headache, mild fever, aches in joints or muscles or temporary nausea. These side effects usually last a day or two and are not dangerous. If symptoms persist, the person should consult their local clinic or hospital immediately.
- Studies show that girls who have received the HPV vaccine do not start having sex sooner and do not have more sexual partners than girls who do not get the vaccine.
- Evidence shows that countries with national HPV vaccination programs with high coverage have a significant reduction in new infections and cervical cancer cases over time.
- Like all other vaccines, the HPV vaccination can produce mild side effects, such as redness, swelling or soreness in the arm where the injection is given. Some people also experience headache, mild fever, aches in joints or muscles or temporary nausea. These side effects usually last a day or two and are not dangerous. If symptoms persist, the person should consult their local clinic or hospital immediately.

## Facts About Cervical Cancer and HPV

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- Cervical cancer is one of the most common cancers affecting women. 350,000 women died of cervical cancer in 2022.<sup>4</sup>
- Cervical cancer is one of many diseases that afflict the poor disproportionately. 94% of worldwide deaths from cervical cancer occurred among women living in low and middle-income countries, mainly due to lack of access to screening and treatment facilities.<sup>5</sup>
- Cervical cancer affects the cervix, part of a woman's uterus (womb).
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the primary cause of cervical cancer
- HPV is highly transmissible. The majority of the population who are sexually active, will become infected with HPV during their lives. Most HPV infection clears naturally, but in some cases, these infections will persist over years and go on to cause cervical cancer.
- Cervical cancer can impact child bearing as surgical removal of the womb may be required.<sup>12</sup>
- There are different types of HPV. HPV 16 and 18 are responsible for the majority of cervical cancer cases. Vaccines protect against these specific types of HPV

## Endnotes

1. Cancer Research UK, Available at <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cervical-cancer/living-with/fertility>
2. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/immunization-coverage>
3. WHO HPV Vaccines Position Paper: Dec 2022
4. IARC 2022 <https://www.iarc.who.int/cancer-type/cervical-cancer/>
5. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/immunization-coverage>

**Key takeaways:**

- Always be courteous and respectful to caregivers and girls.
- Encourage parents and girls to ask questions and be sure to answer the questions.
- Make sure to schedule the next appointment before the girls receive the vaccine.



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These field guides have been developed to support country teams and partners in their HPV communication planning, rollout and monitoring. These guides are available online/offline for use and adaptation in line with local context and requirements.

To access and download the HPV Communication Field Guides, other related resources and examples, please visit <http://globalhpv.com/>

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