

# Don't skip your child's HPV vaccine

August 15 2022, by Deb Balzer

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Kids are heading back into the classroom, and health care professionals say it's important to prepare for the first day of school by keeping up to date with childhood immunizations.

Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse, a Mayo Clinic pediatric infectious diseases physician, says if you have a preteen, make sure he or she gets vaccinated for HPV now. It could prevent your child from getting cancer

later in life.

Sitting in a health care provider's office can be scary for anyone, especially a kid awaiting a vaccination. But not as scary as HPV.

"The scary thing about this virus is that it also is a virus that can cause cancer," Dr. Rajapakse says.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection. About 85% of all people will become infected at some point in their lifetime.

The [vaccine](#) is recommended for 11- and 12-year-old boys and girls. And it can be given during a well-child visit.

"You want to vaccinate [kids](#) before they're ever exposed to this virus. Once you've been infected with the virus, the vaccine is no longer effective in preventing infection with that strain of the [virus](#)."

Dr. Rajapakse says the vaccine can be given to those as young as 9 and up to age 45.

"This is a really effective, really safe vaccine that is unique because it is a vaccine that prevents cancer."

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Citation: Don't skip your child's HPV vaccine (2022, August 15) retrieved 10 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-08-dont-child-hpv-vaccine.html>

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