

August 5, 2016

FridayFocus

National Health Observances

August is National Immunization Awareness Month

For many of our members, August represents more than just the middle of summer. It also represents the end of summer break and the return to school activities – which might mean annual physical examinations for school-age children and college-age young adults. That’s why the Department of Health and Human Services asks us to remember that August is National Immunization Awareness Month.

August is a great time to promote routine vaccinations. As your patients come in for their annual physical exams and screenings, why not seize the opportunity to counsel them as to how they can reduce their risk of infectious disease? One such opportunity is for the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine.

Virtually all cases of cervical cancer and 95% of all anal cancers are caused by HPV. However, few people are aware that as many as 70% of oropharyngeal, 65% of vaginal, and 35% of penile cancers are also the direct result of HPV infections (National Institute of Health, 2015). Although most of these cases could be prevented with routine vaccination, World Health Organization (WHO) research showing that vaccines are far safer than most therapeutic medicines goes largely unheard due to the multitude of well-publicized, sensationalized stories about the “possible” side effects. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released a report entitled “Human Papillomavirus-Associated Cancers – United States, 2008-2012,” stating that an average of 38,793 new HPV-associated cancers are diagnosed in the U.S. annually, including 59% among females and 41% among males (CDC, 2016). This report once again confirmed that the vaccinations are effective at preventing the majority of these cancers.

Based upon this research the CDC has issued the following recommendations:

- For females ages 11-12 and through age 26, a three-vaccination series with any available HPV vaccine
- For males ages 11-12 and through age 21, a three-vaccination series with either quadrivalent or 9-valent HPV vaccines

As we enter the month of August, we encourage you to consider talking with your patients about the benefits of primary preventions realized through vaccinations.

As always, we appreciate your ideas and feedback. Thank you for the quality work you do. All editions of the Friday Focus are available on the SWHP website: <https://swhp.org/en-us/prov/news/providers-friday-focus>.



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