

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Health Alert Network

UPDATE

July 29, 2026

Back-to-School Action Alert: HPV Vaccination at Age 9

Back-to-school visits are one of the most important and time-sensitive opportunities to prevent cancer. Every visit is a chance to protect children before exposure to human papillomavirus (HPV), a leading cause of multiple cancers.

Your recommendation matters. A strong, routine recommendation to begin HPV vaccination at age 9 can significantly increase uptake and ensure more Nebraska children are protected.

Background

HPV is a common virus associated with multiple cancers, including cervical, anal, penile, vulvar, vaginal, and oropharyngeal cancers.

The HPV vaccine prevents infection with the types of viruses responsible for most of these cancers. Leading organizations including the American Cancer Society, American Academy of Pediatrics, St. Jude Cancer Prevention Program, and partners of the Nebraska Cancer Alliance recommend routine HPV vaccination starting at age 9, with catch-up vaccination through age 26.

Despite these recommendations:

- Only 67.4% of Nebraska teens are up to date on HPV vaccination¹
- Coverage is lower in rural communities, where access and awareness barriers persist²
- HPV-related oropharyngeal cancers are increasing, especially among males³
- Up to 40% of individuals lack HPV awareness in states including Nebraska⁴

Why Vaccinate at Age 9

Starting HPV vaccination at age 9 is evidence-based and strongly supported by national and state partners.

- Produces a stronger immune response
- Ensures protection well before potential exposure
- Increases likelihood of on-time series completion
- Separates HPV vaccination from discussions of sexual activity, improving acceptance

Without timely vaccination, children remain at risk for preventable cancers later in life.

Who Should Receive HPV Vaccination

- All children starting at age 9
- Adolescents who have not started or completed the series
- Adults through age 26 if not previously vaccinated
- Adults ages 27– 45 based on shared clinical decision-making

Follow current [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#) (ACIP) schedules for intervals and timing.

Provider Actions That Make a Difference

Providers play a critical role in increasing HPV vaccination rates. Back-to-School provides a high-impact opportunity to work with families already engaging with the healthcare system.

Use all visit types:

- Annual wellness exams
- Sports physicals
- School-required visits

In your practice:

- Implement standing orders
- Use reminder/recall systems: implement and update written reminder call processes and procedures that include utilizing systems such as the [Nebraska State Immunization Information System](#) (NESIIS), EMR reminders, and reporting tools
- Implement and/or update a written event or communication plan documenting HPV vaccination opportunities to your patients.
- Review records to identify patients overdue for immunizations
- Reduce missed opportunities by vaccinating during all appropriate visits
- Become a Nebraska Cancer Alliance member and partner to receive information on the [2025-2030 Nebraska Cancer Plan](#) priorities, objectives, and strategies
- Utilize referral information and resources from the state Comprehensive Cancer Control Program and the Nebraska Cancer Alliance Cancer Prevention and Risk Reduction Workgroup, and HPV Task Force, such as regional, state and national data and HPV and cancer prevention fact sheets
 - Request HPV data for your region from your [local public health department](#)
 - Subscribe to the [NECCCP Cancer Hub](#) newsletter and [HPV Roundtable](#)

Resources

- Nebraska Cancer Alliance HPV Cancer Prevention Task Force: necanceralliance@gmail.com
- Nebraska DHHS Comprehensive Cancer Control Program: dhhs.necccp@nebraska.gov
- Contact your [local health department](#) for vaccination support and education

Additional Resources

NACCHO Vaccine Improvement Toolkit

<https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/County-City-HPV-vaccine-Rate-Improvement-Toolkit.pdf>

Back to School Q and A with Healthcare Providers

<https://www.stjude.org/research/comprehensive-cancer-center/hpv-cancer-prevention-program/resources/news-hpv-program/back-to-school-qanda.html>

Together, we can prevent HPV-related cancers and build a healthier Nebraska.

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