New HPV Vax Recommendation

Widespread vaccination could potentially eliminate cervical, anal, oral and other HPV-related cancers.

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More young adults should be vaccinated against human papillomavirus (HPV), which causes cervical, anal, oral and other cancers, according to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

Ideally, boys and girls should be vaccinated at age 11 or 12, before they become sexually active. But those who did not get the vaccine as adolescents still have a chance to catch up. ACIP now recommends the Gardasil 9 vaccine, which protects against nine types of HPV, for all women and men through age 26. The committee stopped short of recommending vaccination up to age 45, as approved by the Food and Drug Administration, but left this as a shared decision for individuals and their providers.

There's increasing evidence that the vaccine works. A meta-analysis of 65 studies showed decreases in HPV infection and precancerous lesions since the vaccine's introduction. Countries with high vaccination rates also saw the additional benefit of herd immunity, where even people who aren't vaccinated themselves are protected. Over time, this should lead to a reduction in HPV-related cancers—and potentially their elimination.

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