

Strengthening Faith and Fellowship

HPV Cancer Prevention in African American Church Communities

Faith communities are longstanding cornerstones of history and heritage. These communities have been and continue to be leaders and champions of social causes, including advocating for health and wellness. African American churches are pivotal in advancing their members' and broader communities' health and well-being. Traditions remain firmly grounded in faith as African American churches actively educate their community on preventive health practices and enhance access to healthcare services.

HPV vaccination is cancer prevention. It's safe, works, and provides long-lasting protection against six types of cancer. Through awareness and education coupled with access, a future free of HPV cancers is possible. African American churches are important messengers in sharing information about HPV cancer prevention and building on a legacy of preserving and promoting health.

*Beloved, I pray that
in every way you may
succeed and prosper
and be in good
health, just as your
soul prospers.*

3 John 1:2 NIV

What Does HPV Have to Do with Cancer?

- Human papillomavirus (HPV), one of the most common viruses worldwide, is linked to six types of cancer.
- In the United States, nearly 40,000 cases of HPV are diagnosed annually.
- Cancers linked to HPV include oral or throat, cervical, anal, vulvar, vaginal, and penile cancers, with oral or throat cancer being the most common type among males in the United States.



How Do We Know HPV Vaccination Works to Prevent HPV Cancers?

- HPV vaccination prevents 90 percent of HPV cancers.
- Experts have recommended HPV vaccination since 2006 to protect against HPV cancers.
- HPV vaccination is recommended routinely for ages 9-26, ideally starting before age 13 for optimal effectiveness.

Why Is It Important to Get the HPV Vaccination?

- HPV vaccination prevents cancer.
- HPV vaccination has a strong safety record, having been routinely recommended and monitored in the U.S. since 2006.
- HPV vaccination has significantly reduced HPV infections and prevented HPV cancers, maintaining its effectiveness over time without a decline in protection.

What Specific Impact Does HPV Have on African Americans?

- African Americans bear a greater burden of HPV cancers compared to other racial and ethnic groups, particularly for cervical cancer among African American women.
- African American women face higher rates of cervical cancer and mortality compared to white women, being 41% more likely to develop the disease and 75% more likely to die from it. Late-stage diagnosis complicates survival, although early detection can prevent nearly all cases of cervical cancer.
- African American women face a disproportionate burden due to cervical cancer and face historical medical mistreatment and generational mistrust, affecting health-seeking behaviors, follow-up rates after abnormal screenings, and awareness about prevention such as HPV vaccination.

How Can African American Churches Promote Health and Wellness?

- Organize health education seminars and workshops to educate your congregation about HPV, its risks, and the importance of HPV vaccination.
- Host vaccination drives or partner with local health clinics to offer HPV vaccines to church members and the broader community.
- Incorporate HPV awareness into existing health ministries and outreach programs.



What Can You Do?

1

Get vaccinated against HPV: If you are or your child is in the recommended age range, get vaccinated.

2

Encourage others to get vaccinated: Normalize HPV vaccination as a tool for cancer prevention.

3

Share the facts: HPV vaccination is safe, effective, and long-lasting. It prevents 6 types of cancer.

HPV vaccination is cancer prevention. It offers protection today for a lifetime against HPV cancers.

TO LEARN MORE

VISIT stjude.org/HPV OR
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