



# HPV Cancer Prevention Program

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to prevention

## Empowering and Strengthening Community, Culture and Connection to Prevent HPV Cancers

### Focus on African American Communities

Individuals in the United States who identify as African American experience significant health disparities, including rates of HPV vaccination series completion compared to the national average. This gap is partially due to a generational mistrust of healthcare practices among African American populations, stemming from past mistreatment by medical professionals (Amboree & Darkoh, 2021). By strengthening community ties and cultural connections, we can prevent cancer in African American communities through targeted outreach and intervention strategies.

#### HPV Vaccination Rates for 13-17-Year-Olds Identifying as African Americans as of 2023

	>1 dose HPV	HPV UTD
<b>United States Overall</b>	76.8%	61.4%
<b>African American</b>	77.3%	59.0%

Source Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Immunization Survey-Teen (NIS Teen), 2023, HPV vaccination rates for 13-17-year-olds. UTD: Up to Date with the HPV vaccination series

On-time HPV vaccination by the thirteenth birthday protects best. HPV vaccination can be given starting at age 9. HPV vaccination is routinely recommended for everyone ages 9-26 (Pingali et al., 2024). It is not too late to catch up on HPV vaccination. People ages 27-45 are also strongly encouraged to talk with a health care provider to see if HPV vaccination is right for them. Future initiatives should focus on achieving the Healthy People 2030 objective of 80% vaccination rates among adolescents aged 13-15-years-old.

#### Rate of New HPV Cancers by African American Ethnicity as of 2021

	All HPV Cancers			Oropharyngeal Cancer			Cervical Cancer
	Overall	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female	Female
<b>United States Overall</b>	12.6	11.2	14.0	5.2	9.1	1.7	7.1
<b>African American</b>	10.8	8.9	12.6	3.4	6.3	1.1	7.5

\*Rate per 100,000 people

Disparities in HPV-related knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs are well-documented within African American communities (Amboree & Darkoh, 2021).

The overall incidence of HPV cancers is lower among African American populations compared to the national average. However, when it comes to cervical cancer, individuals with a cervix who identify as African American show slightly higher incidence rates than the national average. Data indicate these individuals are 41% more likely to develop cervical cancer and 75% more likely to die from it compared to white women. Late-stage diagnoses significantly hinder survival rates (Cristy et al., 2021).

Getting a clear picture of cervical cancer incidence rates is really important. If we don't take into account how many people in the at-risk group have had hysterectomies, we might end up underestimating these rates. This could lead to some misleading comparisons based on age and could also hide important racial and geographic differences. Plus, research shows that cervical cancer rates are about 55% higher in African American women who have had a hysterectomy (Gopalani et al., 2024).

It is crucial to highlight that HPV vaccination, recommended cervical cancer screenings, and timely diagnostic care and treatment can prevent nearly all cases of cervical cancer. Therefore, increasing awareness and ensuring access to these preventive measures are vital for addressing disparities in outcomes.

## Recommendations

- **Acknowledge Historical Context:** Recognize and address concerns related to institutionalized racism, historical medical mistreatment, and generational mistrust within African American communities. This acknowledgment is crucial for improving health-seeking behaviors, follow-up rates after abnormal screenings, and awareness and utilization of prevention methods, including HPV vaccination.
- **Promote Equitable Practices:** Design and implement programming and educational materials that specifically address racism, medical mistreatment, mistrust, misinformation, and hesitancy among African American vaccination decision-makers.
- **Facilitate Communication:** Identify opportunities to share HPV vaccination recommendations in clinical and community settings and adapt based on preferred communications channels and styles.
- **Utilize Trusted Messengers:** Empower and leverage trusted community organizations and leaders to develop and disseminate culturally and contextually relevant messages about HPV vaccination from credible sources.

## Acknowledgment:

The St. Jude HPV Cancer Prevention Program acknowledges that race and ethnicity are social constructs that may explain why or how some groups of people experience health differently than others. However, race and ethnicity should not be used to explain biological or genetic determinants of health.

## Sources:

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