

Public Comment on HPV Vaccination Recommendations for Boys
Submitted on behalf of the Men's Health Network by Gabrielle Bengelsdorf
Re: Docket # CDC-2025-0024

Introduction

On behalf of Men's Health Network (MHN), a national nonprofit dedicated to improving the health and well-being of men and boys, we urge the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to strengthen HPV vaccine recommendations and expand outreach targeting young males. MHN prioritizes preventive care, particularly where disparities in vaccination and health education persist.

Background

ACIP recommends routine HPV vaccination beginning at age 11 or 12, with catch-up vaccination through age 26 for all individuals (Meites et al., 2019). However, vaccine uptake differs significantly by sex. In 2023, 64.0% of adolescent females were up to date (UTD) on HPV vaccination, compared to only 59.0% of adolescent males (Pingali et al., 2024). This gap reflects the misconception that HPV is primarily a women's health issue, despite rising rates of oropharyngeal, anal, and penile cancers in men (Meites et al., 2019). High-profile cases such as Michael Douglas, Val Kilmer, and Stanley Tucci have helped raise awareness of HPV in males, but gaps in education and access remain.

Analysis

The disparity in HPV vaccination coverage is deeply concerning, given the vaccine's proven effectiveness. Since its introduction in 2006, HPV vaccination has resulted in an 88% decrease in HPV infections among teenage girls and an 81% decrease among young adult women. Among vaccinated women, the proportion of cervical pre-cancers caused by HPV types most often linked to cancer has dropped by 40%. These outcomes demonstrate the vaccine's potential to prevent more than 90% of HPV-related cancers and signal an urgent opportunity to extend similar protection to men (CDC, 2024).

Several factors contribute to the underutilization of the HPV vaccination in boys: lack of awareness, vaccine hesitancy, absence of provider recommendation, and cost-related barriers. Studies have shown that men who have sex with men (MSM) and individuals from racial or ethnic minority groups face additional challenges, such as stigma and a lack of culturally relevant information. A more inclusive approach to outreach and policy is needed to address these inequities (Grandahl & Nevéus, 2021).

Recommendations

We respectfully urge ACIP to take the following actions to ensure protection for boys and men:

1. **Strengthen guidance** by issuing more robust, gender-specific recommendations for routine HPV vaccination in boys and young men.
2. **Expand federal funding** to support male-focused education campaigns and community-based vaccination efforts.
3. **Promote provider engagement** to ensure that healthcare professionals are equipped and encouraged to recommend the vaccine to boys with the same urgency as they do for girls.
4. **Support catch-up vaccination initiatives** for men through age 26, particularly targeting

high-risk populations such as MSM and underserved racial / ethnic groups.

5. **Address barriers to access**, including cost, misinformation, and limited provider communication, through federal and state policy interventions.

Conclusion

Given the rising rates of HPV-related cancers in men and the vaccine's proven safety and effectiveness, ACIP must advance a more inclusive and well-resourced approach to HPV prevention. Improved funding, stronger recommendations, and targeted outreach will not only save lives but also promote gender equality in cancer prevention.

References

CDC. (2024). *HPV Vaccination*. Human Papillomavirus (HPV).

https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/vaccines/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/public/index.html

Grandahl, M., & Nevéus, T. (2021). Barriers towards HPV vaccinations for boys and young men:

A narrative review. *Viruses*, 13(8), 1644. <https://doi.org/10.3390/v13081644>

Meites, E., Szilagyi, P. G., Chesson, H. W., Unger, E. R., Romero, J. R., & Markowitz, L. E.

(2019). Human papillomavirus vaccination for adults: Updated recommendations of the advisory committee on immunization practices. *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 68(32), 698–702. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6832a3>

Pingali, C., Yankey, D., Chen, M., Elam-Evans, L. D., Markowitz, L. E., DeSisto, C. L., Schillie,

S. F., Hughes, M., Valier, M. R., Stokley, S., & Singleton, J. A. (2024). National vaccination coverage among adolescents aged 13–17 years — National immunization survey-teen, United States, 2023. *MMWR Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 73(33), 708–714. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7333a1>