# Guide for Rural Dental Providers Toolkit

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This toolkit was developed as part of the American Cancer Society National HPV Vaccination Roundtable (ACS HPVRT) Emerging Leaders Program. Fellows are early-career professionals whose work was informed by the guidance and mentorship of ACS HPVRT leadership and team members. The program supports HPV vaccination outreach, quality improvement efforts, and the sharing of best practices. The content does not necessarily represent the official positions of the American Cancer Society or the ACS HPVRT program.

Learn more about the program: Emerging Leaders Program - National HPV Vaccination Roundtable

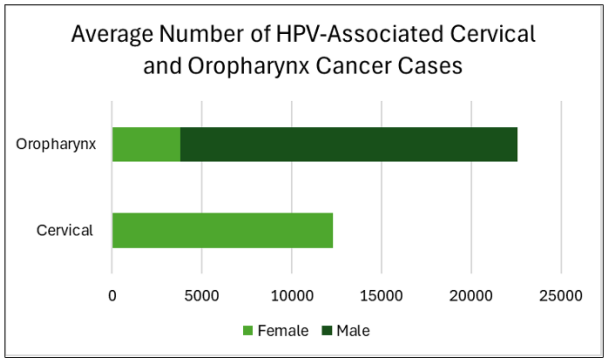
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# Introduction

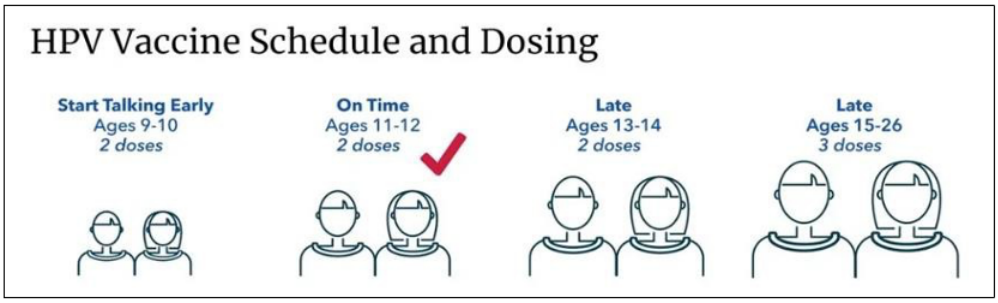
Welcome to the Guide for Rural Dental Providers Toolkit! This guide is intended to help rural dental offices with efforts to encourage HPV vaccination for oral health. Adolescents tend to see their dentist more than their pediatrician, creating an opportunity for dental providers to engage in HPV conversations and vaccination. Start by reading Cancer Prevention Through HPV Vaccination: An Action Guide for Dental Health Care Providers, and then read this toolkit for more information about HPV and resources tailored to rural clinics.

## HPV and HPV Vaccine Background




*Reference: CDC (2025). Cancers linked with HPV each year.*

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) is linked to six types of cancer (i.e., cervical, oropharyngeal, penile, anal, vaginal, and vulvar).
- Most HPV infections will clear on their own, while persistent infection increases the risk of cancer.
- Oropharyngeal cancer is the most common HPV-related cancer.
  - Approximately 70% of oropharyngeal cancers are caused by HPV.
  - It is more common in males than females.
- The HPV vaccine was approved in 2006 for females and in 2011 for males.
  - Extended approval for individuals 27-45 in 2018
- Gardasil 9 is currently used in the United States.
  - Protects against nine types of HPV: seven that are associated with cancer and two that are associated with warts
- Current American Cancer Society vaccine recommendations
  - All children receive the vaccine between ages 9 and 12.
  - Teens and young adults ages 13 through 26 who have not been vaccinated, or who have not gotten all their doses, should get the vaccine as soon as possible.
  - The American Cancer Society does not recommend HPV vaccination for people older than age 26 years.
- Current vaccine recommendations (AAP)
  - Start as early as age 9.
  - Start vaccine series before 15 years old – two doses.
  - Start vaccine series after 15 years old – three doses.
  - Recommended for both girls and boys.




Reference: *Vax2stopcancer.org*

- States that **allow** dentists to vaccinate for HPV: Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Oregon, and New Jersey
- States that **do not allow** pharmacists to vaccinate for HPV: New Hampshire and New York

## Where Patients Can Get Vaccinated

- Primary care provider
- Local health department
- Pharmacists can vaccinate for HPV across the US (including Washington, D.C.), except in New York and New Hampshire
- Vaccine drives/clinics at schools, if applicable to the community

## Common HPV Vaccine Misconceptions to Address

1. *Only for girls* – The vaccine is for everyone; mouth and throat cancers caused by HPV are more common among males, so it is very important that adolescent boys are also vaccinated.
2. *Impacts fertility* – The vaccine is very safe and has shown no impact on future fertility. In fact, the vaccine can actually help protect fertility since some of the cancers caused by HPV can have a negative impact on fertility.
3. *"My kid isn't having sex"* – The vaccine protects against cancers down the road; yes, HPV is commonly transmitted through sexual activity, but also through intimate skin-to-skin contact. The main focus should be on cancer prevention; the vaccine is most effective if it is given before they are exposed to HPV.
4. *The vaccine is too new and not safe* – The vaccine has been approved for 20 years and is shown to be very safe and effective. The most common side effects of the vaccine are pain, swelling, and redness at the injection site.

## General Vaccine Misconceptions

1. *Vaccines alter DNA (mostly mRNA vaccines)* – Vaccines do not alter DNA. These vaccines allow your body to create antibodies; the materials in the vaccine do not stay in the body long term and are broken down.
2. *No freedom to choose* – Focus on community. By vaccinating, you are helping not just yourself, but your community by protecting those who might not be able to get the vaccine.
3. *Natural immunity is better* – Vaccines provide immunity without risking potentially severe symptoms or other complications that come with actually getting sick.
4. *The vaccine gives you the disease* – The vaccine helps your body create an immune response; you might feel some of the symptoms you would if you were sick, including fever, headache and sore arm. Your body is creating antibodies and reacting to that part of the vaccine, which is a good thing.

## Common Questions and Responses

**Q. Why is a dentist talking to me about HPV?**
A. HPV causes about 70% of mouth and throat cancers. This impacts overall oral health, so we are invested in preventing these cancers through vaccinating.

**Q. Is the vaccine safe?**
A. Yes, this is one of the safest vaccines available. The most common side effects of the vaccine are pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site.

**Q. Is the vaccine effective?**
A. Yes, it is very effective. Studies show that the vaccine can prevent more than 90% of cancers caused by HPV.

**Q. Why should I start vaccinating at age 9?**
A. The recommended age to vaccinate is 9-12, with the goal of completing the vaccine series by age 13. The vaccine is most effective when given before exposure to HPV.

**Q. Is the vaccine expensive?**
A. The vaccine is covered through insurance and the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program for those who do not have insurance.

# Birthday Card Reminders



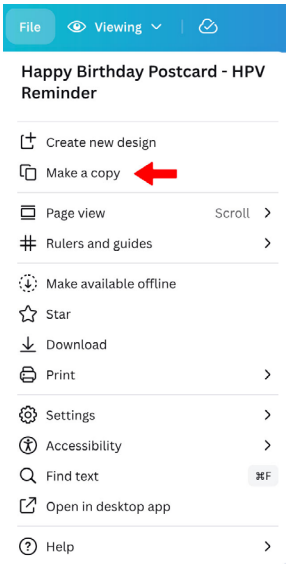




## Access and Edit Birthday Card

Follow the Link https://www.canva.com/design/DAGzFQFaCpA/MUYyS6pzQijgJJwo6ciaag/edit to access the birthday card.

1. In the top left of the page, click “File” and select “Make a copy.”
   a. If your clinic vaccinates, you can change the language on the postcard to reflect that:
2. In the copy, add personalized information for your clinic, including incentives, doctor’s name, email address or website, and phone number. Do not fill out parent or guardian or address information until after printing.



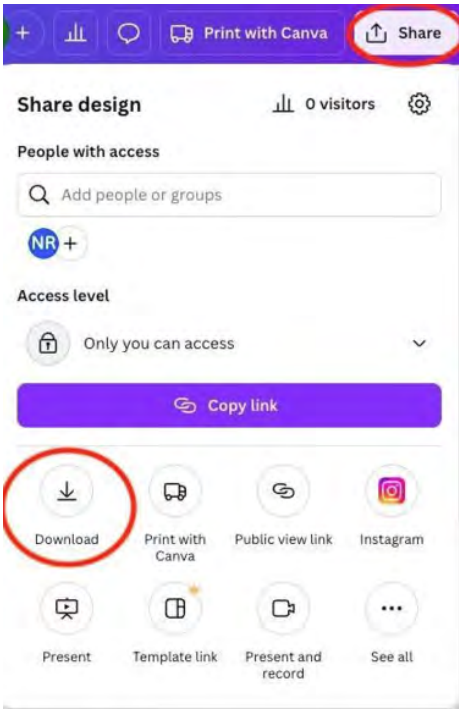

**Make the choice to get them the HPV vaccine through their regular doctor or local health department by their next visit and (insert incentive)!**

**OR**

**Get vaccinated at their next visit and (insert incentive)!**

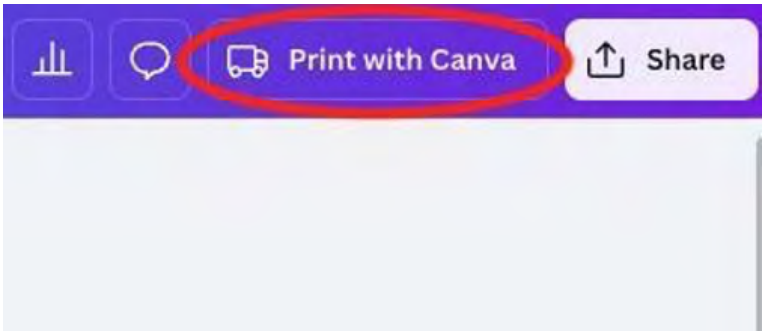
## Download and Print on Your Own

1. Click on “Share” and select “Download.”
2. Personalize by writing the child’s name, parent or guardian’s address, return address and stamp, then sticker shut and send.




## Print With Canva

1. In the top right corner, select “Print with Canva
   a. Select “Print All Pages.”
   b. Choose large size (to be able to fold and sticker shut).
   c. Choose paper type and finish.
   d. Select number of postcards.
   e. Check box for envelopes if you do not want to fold and sticker.
   f. Click “Continue,” and proceed to payment.
   g. Once postcards have arrived, personalize by writing in the child’s name, the parent or guardian’s address, return address and stamp, then sticker shut and send.



# Email/Phone/Text-reminder Scripts

- Edit scripts for your clinic.
- Use for a reminder call, email, patient portal message.
- Text-reminder script available for offices with texting capabilities.
- Call/send to parent or guardian on their child's ninth birthday.

## For States That Cannot Vaccinate or Choose not to Offer HPV Vaccination in the Dental Clinic

**Email or Phone-reminder Script:**

Hello _____ (parent or guardian's name),

This is (your name) from _____ (dental office name).

First, I am reaching out to wish _____ (child's name) a happy birthday!

Now that (child's name) is 9 years old, they are eligible for the HPV vaccine, which can prevent six types of cancer, including cancer of the mouth and throat. As your child's dentist, we not only care about the health of their teeth, but also about their whole oral health.

We strongly recommend _____ (child's name) receive the HPV vaccine series. Your child can receive the vaccine from their regular doctor or local health department.

If you have any questions, please reach out to us at _____ (phone or email address for questions)

Sincerely,
The team at (Dental office name)

**Text-reminder Script (63 words; ~375 characters w/ spaces):**

Hello _____ (parent or guardian's name). Now that _____ (child's name) is 9 years old, they are eligible for the HPV vaccine, which can prevent cancer of the mouth and throat. At _____ (dental office name), we strongly recommend that your child receive the HPV vaccine series from their regular doctor or local health department. Please call us if you have any questions at _____ (phone number).

**Radio Campaign:**

Would you believe us if we said you can prevent your child from developing cancer when they are older? Well, you can help prevent six types of cancer, including mouth and throat cancer, by vaccinating your child for HPV. (insert common misconception for community).

You can start vaccinating your child at 9 years old. At _____ (insert clinic name), we not only care about the health of your child's teeth, but also about their whole oral health. We know you have many choices to make as a parent. The choice to vaccinate is an important one. We strongly recommend that your child receive the HPV vaccine at their next doctor's appointment. You can also receive the vaccine at your local health department.

If you have any questions about the HPV vaccine, please reach out to us at _____ (phone number).

## For States Where Dentists Can Vaccinate and Offer HPV Vaccination at Their Dental Practice

States that can vaccinate include Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Oregon, and New Jersey

**Email or Phone-reminder Script:**

Hello _____ (parent or guardian's name),

This is (your name) from _____ (dental office name).

First, I am calling to wish _____ (child's name) a happy birthday.

Now that _____ (child's name) is 9 years old, they are eligible for the HPV vaccine, which can prevent six types of cancer, including mouth and throat cancers. As your child's dentist, we not only care about the health of their teeth, but also about their whole oral health.

We strongly recommend your child receive the HPV vaccine series. We can start the series at _____ (child's name)'s next visit with us, (which is scheduled for [insert date] / we can schedule that today). They can also receive the vaccine from their regular doctor or the local health department.

If you have any questions, please reach out to us at _____ (phone or email address for questions)

Sincerely,
The team at _____ (dental office name)

**Text-reminder Script (73 words; 428 characters w/ spaces):**

Hi _____ (parent's name). Now that _____ (child's name) is 9 years old, they are eligible for the HPV vaccine, which can prevent mouth and throat cancers. At _____ (dental office name), we strongly recommend that your child receive the HPV vaccine series. We can start the series at their next appointment, or they can receive it from their doctor, local health department, or pharmacy. Please call us at _____ (phone number) if you have any questions.

**Radio Campaign:**

Would you believe us if we said you can prevent your child from developing some cancers when they are older? Well, you can help prevent six types of cancer, including mouth and throat cancers, by vaccinating your child for HPV. [insert common myth/perception for community].

You can start vaccinating your child at 9 years old. At (insert clinic name), we not only care about the health of your child's teeth, but also about their whole oral health. We know you have many choices to make as a parent. The choice to vaccinate is an important one. We strongly recommend that your child get vaccinated for HPV. We can vaccinate your child at our office located at _____ (insert address), or you can request the vaccine at your child's next doctor's appointment, the health department, or a local pharmacy.

If you have any questions about the HPV vaccine or would like to schedule a vaccine appointment, please reach out to us at _____ (phone number).

## Additional Dental Resources

- Team Maureen Dental Toolkit
- American Cancer Society HPV Vaccination Roundtable (ACS HPVRT) Resource Center