Human papillomavirus (pap-ah-LO-mah-VYE-rus), or HPV, is a group of common viruses that affect both boys and girls. HPV can cause anal and mouth/throat cancers. It can also cause cancer in the cervix, vulva, and vagina in women; and cancer of the penis in men. Different types of HPV can cause genital warts.

Even though most people do not show any symptoms, HPV can still be spread through contact during any type of sexual activity with an infected person.

Most people will be infected at some point in their lives. HPV infection is most common during the late teens and early 20s.

About 79 million Americans are currently infected with HPV.

About 14 million people become infected each year.

The vaccine is recommended for boys and girls at ages 11 to 12-years-old because:

- The immune response to the HPV vaccine is better in preteens.
- Your child should be completely vaccinated before they are exposed to the virus.

Catch-up vaccination can be given at ages 13 through 26.

The most important thing is for all preteens to complete the HPV vaccine series. Teens and young adults who haven’t started or finished the HPV vaccine series should make an appointment today to get vaccinated.

Pregnant women and anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to any component of the vaccine or to a previous dose should not receive the vaccine.

Families who need help paying for vaccines should ask their healthcare provider about the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. The VFC program provides vaccines to uninsured and underinsured children younger than 19 years old. Parents may have to pay administration and office visit fees. For more information, contact the NJ VFC at (609) 826-4862.