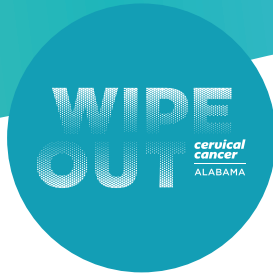


Top 7 Concerns

About Cervical Cancer Prevention & How to Respond



OPERATION WIPE OUT Champions

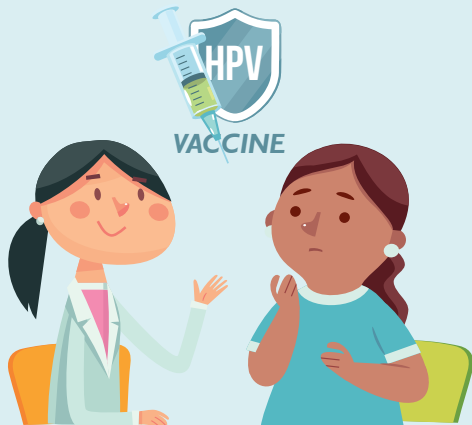
Below are some suggestions on talking points when sharing information and/or educating others.

CONCERN #1

"The HPV vaccine is too new. We don't know if it's safe."

How to Respond:

- "I hear that. It's natural to be cautious about anything involving your child. But the HPV vaccine has been around for over **15 years** and has been given to **millions of kids, teenagers, and adults worldwide**. It's one of the most studied vaccines ever, and the data shows it's very safe, with only mild side effects like a sore arm. Most importantly, it protects against several types of HPV-related cancers, including cervical cancer."
- "If I had a tool that could prevent cancer for someone I love, I'd use it. That's what this vaccine does."



CONCERN #2

"My child is too young for a vaccine related to sex."

How to Respond:

- "That's a common thought. But the HPV vaccine is about **cancer prevention**, not about sex. It works best when given **before someone is exposed to the virus**, which is why doctors recommend it at ages **9-12**, before most kids are even thinking about relationships."
- "It's just like giving protection early, the same way we do for chickenpox or meningitis."

CONCERN #3

"I saw on social media that a child got very sick after getting the HPV vaccine."

How to Respond:

- "There is a lot of information on the internet and social media that is not accurate because anyone can post information without checking the facts. There is no evidence that the HPV vaccine makes anyone sick besides the common side effects of any vaccine (e.g., sore arm, headache). For **reliable information**, go to trusted sources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or other websites associated with reputable medical centers and/or health departments."

CONCERN #4

“I don’t need a Pap or screening — I feel fine.”

How to Respond:

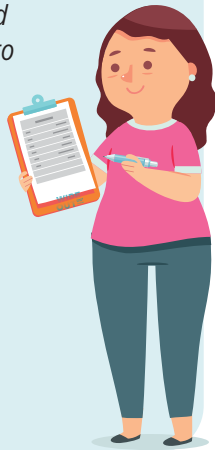
- “I totally get that. It’s easy to think if nothing’s wrong, everything’s fine. But cervical cancer often has **no symptoms early on**, which is why regular screening is so important. A Pap test or HPV test can catch changes **before they turn into cancer**, and it only takes a few minutes.”
- “It’s like getting your oil checked. Even if the car runs fine, you want to catch issues early before it breaks down.”

CONCERN #5

“I don’t trust the healthcare system.”

How to Respond:

- “That’s real. A lot of people have had negative experiences, and it’s okay to feel cautious. That’s why community-led programs and trusted clinics are so important. It is also important that you are prepared for your visit and advocate for your health. I can help you with a list of questions to ask your provider so you can get the health care you expect.”



CONCERN #6

“I don’t have time or money to deal with this.”

How to Respond:

- “You’re not alone. Life is busy, and resources can be tight. The good news is that screening and HPV vaccination are covered by health insurance plans and there is no deductible. If you do not have health insurance, there is a program (**Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program**) that offers free screening and follow-up. The same for HPV vaccination for children under 19 years of age. Let’s find out what’s available near you. You shouldn’t have to choose between your health and everything else.”
- “I can help you find a clinic that works with your schedule or budget. You don’t have to do it alone.”

CONCERN #7

“I had a Pap test and the results were abnormal. My doctor asked me to go back to the clinic, but I cannot deal with a cancer diagnosis right now.”

How to Respond:

- “An abnormal result **does not mean you have cancer**. It just means your doctor saw some changes that need a closer look and perhaps further tests. Most abnormal results are not cancer. They may be changes that can be treated **before it becomes cancer**.”

Additional Quick Tips

- **Listen first**, without interrupting or judging.
- **Speak from your own experience** or share a local story.
- Use positive, actionable words like **protect**, **prevent**, and **family health**.
- If you don’t know the answer, say: “That’s a good question. Let me help you find out.”

DISCLAIMER: The purpose of these tips is to facilitate conversations based on our experience in Alabama as well as recent scientific literature. It is not encompassing of all concerns **OPERATION WIPE OUT** champions and partners will face in the community.

For more information and resources go to www.operationwipeout.org and/or reach out to **OPERATION WIPE OUT** coordinating partners.

