



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Few Alabama adults have received HPV vaccine, survey finds

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For the first time ever, Alabama has data to measure the percentage of adults who have received at least one dose of the HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccine. HPV is the virus that causes cervical cancer. The vaccine is recommended for males and females ages 9 to 26. It is most effective when given to children beginning at age 11.

The results were compiled from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, a system of health-related telephone surveys that collects state data about U.S. residents regarding their health-related risk behaviors, chronic health conditions and use of preventive services. In 2012 the Alabama Department of Public Health Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (ACCCP) sponsored questions about HPV vaccinations to study how many people were taking advantage of this important protection against cervical and related cancers later in life.

Alabama has obtained data on the HPV vaccine for adolescents in the past, but the results of this survey mark the first time self-reported HPV vaccine uptake has been measured in adults. Almost 20 percent (19.4) of adults in the 18- to 24-year-old age group reported ever having had the vaccine. In this age range, 34.4 percent of females and 4.2 percent of males reported initiating the series.

Because HPV usually does not exhibit any symptoms, it is possible to have it without knowing it and to spread the virus to others. HPV can be prevented with a series of three safe, effective vaccines that protect against the most common types of HPV and their related health problems. These data will serve as a baseline for the ACCCP's efforts to educate Alabama residents on the benefits of the HPV vaccine.

"It is vital that Alabamians understand the importance of protecting themselves and their children against certain cancers as well as the ease of access to the vaccine," Dr. Grace Thomas, Assistant State Health Officer for Family Health Services, said. "Whenever the vaccine is taken, it is important that all three doses are received to provide maximum protection." The data are very encouraging because nearly 70 percent of those vaccinated received all three doses.

The HPV vaccine is available through your health care provider as well as through the Vaccines for Children and Family Planning programs at your local county health department. You may

also be able to get the vaccine by talking with your pharmacist. It is covered by most private insurance policies, including Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama.

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