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*Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*

### **HPV Vaccine**

Northampton Area Pediatrics recommends starting the HPV vaccine series at 9 years of age. This recommendation is supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics because of its proven safety and efficacy in preventing many types of cancers and other diseases in both women and men. We will be recommending that your child receive this vaccine at the 9-year checkup, with a booster at 10 years of age.

HPV stands for Human Papillomavirus and is the most common sexually-transmitted infection in the United States. An estimated 14 million new infections occur each year. While a vast majority of these infections cause no symptoms and resolve on their own, a persistent infection can occur which results in prolonged cancer treatments for these cancers along with several thousands of deaths a year.

Why is the vaccine given at this young age when your child will have no possible exposure for so many years? The answer is that this vaccine is much more effective in younger patients. The immune response is so robust at this young age and the duration is so prolonged that this gives children the best chance to fight off this potential virus and avoid the pain and suffering associated with the diseases it causes. Delaying the vaccine decreases the chances of the best immune response and increases the chances that they will not be fully protected.

As pediatric providers we strongly believe that prevention is the best way of attacking infections. The best opportunity to prevent HPV is to vaccinate at a young age.