

**Contact Information:**

Diana Olson
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
<http://www.nfid.org>
(301) 656-0003 x140

Let's Talk About HPV: New Campaign Aims to Help Young People Talk with Parents about Cancer-Preventing Vaccine

Bethesda, MD (July 17, 2018) – The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) announced a new national digital campaign with the social advocacy group DoSomething.org to raise awareness about human papillomavirus (HPV) and to encourage teens and young adults to talk with their parents and guardians about HPV vaccination, which can help prevent certain cancers.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). It can be deadly and is the primary cause of cervical cancer as well as other diseases affecting males and females, including cancers of the mouth and throat, as well as genital warts. In the U.S., there are an estimated 14 million new infections each year, and 79 million individuals, most in their late teens and early 20s, are infected with HPV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends HPV vaccination starting at age 11 to 12 years.

HPV vaccination is highly effective at preventing cancer, but for many preteens and teens, having “The Talk” with their parents or guardians about an STI can be awkward. “HPV is spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact and can infect anyone who has ever had a sexual encounter. That fact makes some parents and their children feel uncomfortable talking about HPV vaccination,” says NFID President Joseph A. Bocchini, Jr., M.D. “Because HPV infection is so common—more than 80 percent of sexually active men and women will get HPV in their lifetime—we have to break down communication barriers and help foster these conversations.”

Through “The Talk” campaign, NFID and DoSomething.org hope to make conversations about HPV prevention easier. The campaign website (www.dosomething.org/us/campaigns/the-talk) encourages young people to create personalized cards that include a keyword. Participants can give these cards to their parents or guardians to start a conversation about HPV vaccination. By texting the keyword, participants will receive information about HPV and the importance of vaccination through email, direct messaging and social media, including posts on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. The campaign also includes an opportunity for participants to win a \$3,000 scholarship.

“We are very excited to partner with DoSomething.org on this campaign to help teens and young adults talk more openly and freely with their parents and guardians about protecting themselves against a sexually transmitted infection,” says Marla Dalton, CAE, NFID Executive Director and CEO. “This is really about preventing cancer—what could be more important than that?”

The campaign will run through September 17, 2018. NFID will host a webinar on August about the importance of adolescent vaccination, including HPV on August 21, 2018 at noon ET. Complimentary registration will be available at www.nfid.org/webinars.

About the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

Founded in 1973, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to educating the public and healthcare professionals about the causes, prevention and treatment of infectious diseases across the lifespan. Visit www.nfid.org for more information.

About DoSomething.org

DoSomething.org is the largest not-for-profit exclusively for young people and social change. The digital platform is activating 6 million young people (and counting!) to create offline impact in every US area code and in 131 countries. Visit www.dosomething.org for more information.

This initiative is supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Merck & Co., Inc. NFID policies restrict funders from controlling program content.

Note: This press release was updated to include newer data on HPV prevalence. An earlier draft said more than 50 percent of sexually active men and women will get HPV in their lifetime. The current estimate is 80 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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