

For A Healthy Start to the School Year, Schedule Your Preteen's Health Check-up

(NAPSA)—Taking your preteen or teen for a health check-up or sports physical is an important part of getting them ready for the new school year. During the appointment, be sure to speak with your child's health care professional about diseases they may be at risk for. According to William O'Neal, Jr., a Certified Physician Assistant and member of the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the best time to help prevent diseases is before your preteen or teen is exposed to them.

One of these diseases is human papillomavirus, or HPV. HPV is a virus that can cause genital warts and certain pre-cancers and cancers in males and females. HPV often has no visible signs or symptoms, so many people who have HPV don't even know it. Although most HPV infections clear on their own, there's no way to predict who will or won't clear the virus. In some cases, HPV can lead to significant diseases such as cervical cancer. In the U.S., 12,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year.

Arming yourself with information about adolescent diseases is the first step to help maintain your adolescent's health, and your health care professional is a key resource. A few questions to jumpstart your conversation include:



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- What diseases might my adolescent be at risk for?
- Are these the same for girls and boys?
- What effects can these diseases have on my preteen/teen?
- How can I help protect my adolescent from these diseases now and in the future?
- How can my preteen/teen be exposed to these diseases?
- When should I schedule my preteen/teen's next check-up?

Give preteens and teens the tools to help prepare them for a safe and healthy school year by initiating a discussion with their health care professional. To learn more about adolescent diseases, visit www.momcentral.com/teenhealth for an educational guide, developed by Merck together with the American Nurse Practitioner Foundation and the Physician Assistant Foundation.