

ALABAMA

“Third Time’s the Charm” Campaign for HPV Vaccination

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is known to cause several types of cancer in both men and women. The virus, which is spread through sexual contact, is the leading cause of cervical cancer in women, with roughly 11,000 new cases and 4,000 deaths among U.S. women each year.*

The HPV vaccine is readily available and is a relatively easy way to prevent cervical cancer, yet only about half of teenage girls in the United States have taken the vaccine. One of the main reasons for skipping vaccination comes down to the sexual connotation attached to the virus—a barrier which has proven difficult to overcome.

In 2011, the Alabama Department of Public Health’s (ADPH) Comprehensive Cancer Control Program joined with the ADPH Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program to create and carry out a campaign to promote HPV vaccination. The “Third Time’s the Charm” campaign targets Alabama parents, physicians, and college students with a message that emphasizes the importance of getting all three doses of the HPV vaccine.

Parents and physicians are urged to begin the vaccinations at age 11, when it can be paired with the tetanus–diphtheria–pertussis vaccination, which is for Alabama’s rising 6th-grade children. These vaccines are covered by most insurance plans and by the Vaccines for Children Program, managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. College students are reminded that under health care reform, the vaccines may be covered by their parents’ insurance.

Campaign materials, including postcards, posters, and a 30-second commercial that ran in Alabama movie theaters throughout the

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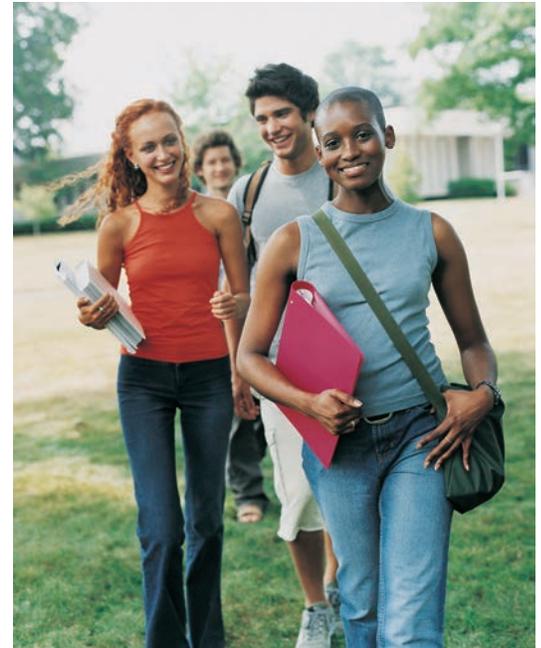
*U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. *United States Cancer Statistics: 1999–2008 Incidence and Mortality Web-based Report*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute; 2012. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/uscs>.

summer, were part of the campaign. These materials were adapted for a series of print ads running in parenting magazines and a journal for physicians.

After this initial push, the campaign has been working with the ADPH Immunization Division to send birthday cards with reminders about getting vaccines, including the HPV vaccine, to parents of Alabama girls on their 11th and 12th birthdays. “Third Time’s the Charm” campaign materials have been expanded to include signs placed on gas pumps throughout Alabama and a small bracelet charm packaged with HPV educational material for college students.

REACH, a program created by CDC to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health care, contacted the Alabama Comprehensive Cancer Control Program about the possibility of using teen educators to speak to peers about the HPV virus and vaccine. They recognized the campaign as being particularly effective because it de-emphasizes the sexually transmitted disease portion of the message and concentrates instead on the virus’s link to cervical cancer.

The “Third Time’s the Charm” campaign addresses several barriers, particularly in educating residents and providers about the importance of getting all three doses of the vaccine. By emphasizing the virus’s connection to cervical cancer, the campaign seeks to overcome the stigma associated with HPV vaccination in the minds of parents of young girls. The campaign has mailed more than 3,600 birthday cards each month to parents of 11-year-old girls and distributed close to 2,500 HPV information cards with an attached charm to college students. REACH has distributed 500 informational pamphlets and 1,000 “Third Time’s the Charm” bookmarks to teen educators and community partners in the Birmingham area. Future plans include examining HPV immunization rates across the state to determine the effect of the campaign.



Adding It Up: Third Time’s a Charm Materials in the Community

- *3,600 birthday cards*
- *2,500 HPV information cards*
- *1,000 bookmarks*
- *500 informational pamphlets*