We were pleased to hear that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended routine vaccination for pre-teen boys against the human papillomavirus (HPV). A CDC panel approved routine HPV vaccination for pre-teen girls in 2006, but compliance rates have been much lower than ideal. Experts from the CDC believe that implementing routine immunization for prepubescent boys will not only cut down on the incidence of HPV-related conditions and cancers in males, but will also indirectly reduce the rate of this sexually transmitted infection in women.

The CDC panel’s unanimous vote specifically recommends the Gardasil vaccine, which protects against four different strains of HPV, including the two responsible for the majority of cervical cancer cases. While parents of teenagers may be uncomfortable vaccinating their children for a virus that is sexually transmitted, the point is to immunize children before they become sexually active since the vaccine is most effective in those who have not already been infected.

ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross praises the CDC for addressing this issue and taking such a scientifically sound position. Frankly, he says, to do otherwise would be both unscientific and counter to the interest of public health. Gender parity is necessary here: HPV infects both men and women, and can lead to cancer in both as well. Parents who balk at the vaccine need to look at the facts.

Now that the CDC’s advisory panel has made its case, their recommendation requires the final approval of CDC Director Thomas Frieden and Secretary of U.S. Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius.