

State of Alaska
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

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State to increase Gardasil availability in Alaska

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends Gardasil[®] for girls and women age 9 to 26 to prevent infection with certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV) that cause the majority of cases of cervical cancer and genital warts. Below are questions and answers about the vaccine's availability and cost.

Will Alaska's Department of Health and Social Services cover the cost for all girls aged 18 or younger to receive the Gardasil vaccine series?

No. The department will only provide the vaccine for Alaska girls aged 9 to 18 years who are eligible for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program.

What is the VFC program?

Vaccines for Children is a federal entitlement program that pays for vaccines for children aged 18 or younger who meet at least one of the following eligibility requirements:

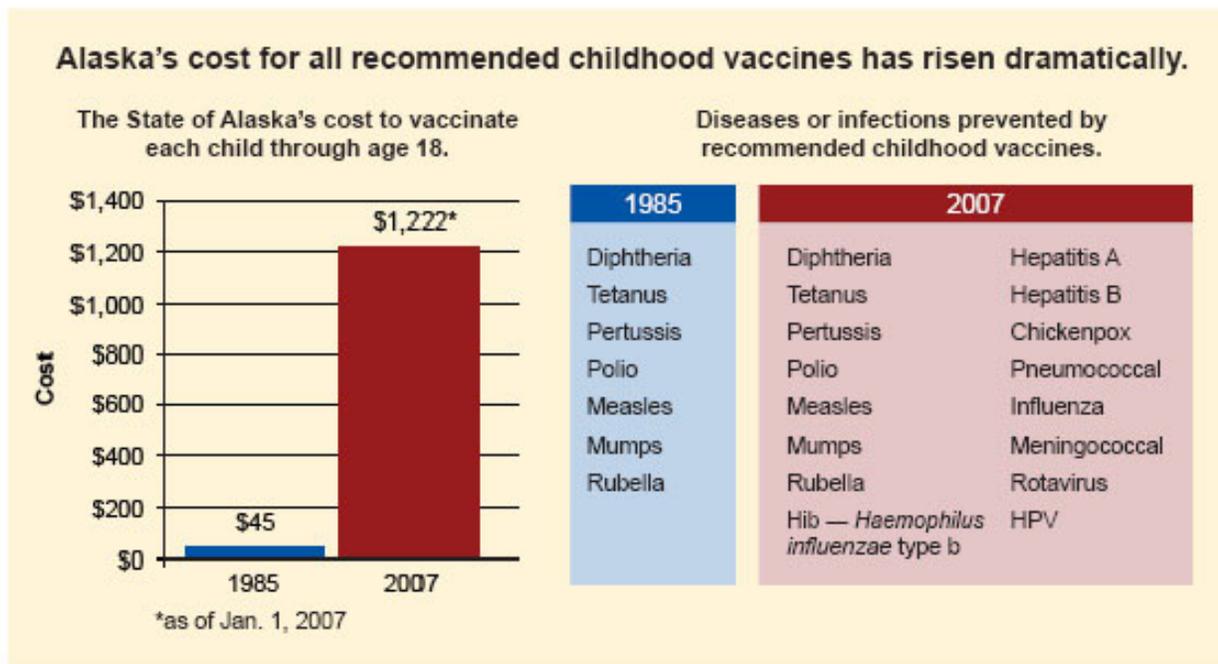
- Eligible for Medicaid, the government insurance program for low-income families and people with disabilities;
- Alaska Native or American Indian;
- Uninsured;
- Insured, but coverage doesn't pay for vaccination. Children meeting this requirement must get the vaccine at a federally-qualified health center. For a list of such clinics in Alaska, visit <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/director/FQHC/>.

For more than three decades, the Department of Health and Social Services has provided free vaccines to all children, regardless of whether they qualified for VFC. Why is it changing its policy now?

In order to pay for all recommended vaccines for all Alaska children, the state has used two sources of federal money. One source was the federal VFC program that paid for vaccines for children who qualified (see above). Almost two-thirds of Alaska children through age 18 — about 149,000 — qualify for this program.

About another 80,000 Alaska children do not qualify for VFC. To cover the vaccine costs of those children, the state department used a second federal source of money — CDC's Section 317 immunization grant. This source of federal funding has not kept pace with the rising costs for new vaccines such as Gardasil.

The following chart shows the rising cost to cover a child’s vaccines.



Do most states cover the cost of all recommended children’s vaccines?

No. Alaska was one of only nine states in 2005 that provided all recommended vaccines for children at no cost, regardless of whether they qualified for VFC.

Will the state be able to pay for all children’s vaccines developed in the future?

Probably not. Due to the rising costs of new vaccines, the Department of Health and Social Services likely will provide new vaccines at no cost only for children eligible for VFC.

How much will Gardasil cost a girl who is age 9 through 18, but not eligible for VFC?

Girls who do not qualify for the VFC program will have to pay for the shots, unless their health insurance covers the vaccine’s cost. The amount of coverage will vary depending on the person’s insurance plan. The private sector price for Gardasil starts at \$120 per shot, or \$360 for the three-shot vaccine series. Some local clinics may charge more. Most clinics also will charge an extra fee to give each dose of the vaccine.

How much will Gardasil cost a woman age 19 to 26?

The actual vaccine cost is the same for women of any age — \$360 for the three-shot series. But there are some potential funding options. Women ages 19 and 20 who qualify for Medicaid can get the entire Gardasil series for less than \$10. Women 19 and older who do not qualify for Medicaid may receive coverage from their health insurance companies. They also can ask their medical provider if they qualify for coverage under a special assistance program run through Merck & Co., Inc., the pharmaceutical company that makes Gardasil.

Where can I get Gardasil in Alaska?

Medical offices receiving vaccine from the Department of Health and Social Services should have vaccine available early this summer. Some private clinics already have purchased vaccine. Check with your doctor's office or other clinics in your area. They can let you know if they have the vaccine, and whether any funding options are available to you.

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