If there were a vaccine to prevent a cancer that kills 4,000 women each year, would you get it for your children? Patti Casa is ready to remind you that cervical cancer can affect anyone.

“When I was diagnosed with cervical cancer, I went into a cocoon. At first, I didn’t want to tell anyone. But my story can help other women, and there is nothing to be ashamed of. I don’t want anyone to become a statistic—all women need to know that knowledge is power.”

Every year, about 4,000 women die from cervical cancer in the United States—even with screening and treatment. In addition, about 17,600 women are affected by HPV cancers yearly. HPV is short for human papillomavirus, a common virus in both men and women. HPV can cause anal cancer and cancer of the mouth/throat (oropharyngeal cancer) in men and women. It can also cause cancers of the cervix, vulva, and vagina in women, and cancer of the penis in men.

The remarkable thing is that most of these cancers can be prevented by HPV vaccine.

“We have a vaccine against cancer that is safe and effective. Make sure your 11-12 year olds get vaccinated against HPV. No one’s daughter should have to suffer from cervical cancer in the future,” said Dr. Anne Schuchat, assistant surgeon general and director, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Patti added, “I had 35 radiation sessions and eight chemotherapy sessions. I really wanted to become a mother. Chemotherapy took that choice from me. I urge mothers to take care of themselves, and go see the doctor for Pap tests—even if you’re healthy—and to protect your children with vaccination.”

“My husband was so supportive and never questioned me. In fact, he is the one who researched cervical cancer, came to me, and educated me. There were days I didn’t want to go to chemotherapy, but he got me dressed and said ‘let’s go!’ Now we are both dedicated to educating the Latino community—and making sure our nieces, nephews, and other kids we know get vaccinated. We want them protected before they start thinking about dating, marriage, or starting a family,” she said.

If you haven’t gotten your child the HPV vaccine yet, or haven’t completed the three-dose series, call your child’s doctor or nurse today. If you have a teen or young adult who isn’t yet vaccinated, it’s not too late.

Visit the CDC website to learn more about HPV vaccine and the cancers it protects against: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens.


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