

Now I Know | *By Lily David*

When I was a young boy,

I was not able to get an HPV vaccine, my mom would always say,
“Boys your age don’t get HPV shots; that’s a girl thing.”

I never understood why a vaccine to protect my body was
something only for girls. As it became more popular, I started to
worry that I, just like girls, I could be at risk for the virus.

When HPV was approved for boys and men, I felt as though I didn't need or want the vaccine anymore because for years it was not normal for young men to get the vaccine.

Growing up,

I never heard boys talk about the HPV vaccine, and most of the health campaigns were aimed at girls and women. This stillness made me feel like this was something I shouldn't care about. I now feel that the vaccine is something only for girls, and getting it will make me less of a man.

As time grew on,

I was able to learn from the stigma I had. Now, I've been thinking a lot about why I believed so many things people told me throughout my life—without questioning if they were really true for me.

I now have my HPV vaccine and can face the misconceptions I had, and wonder why I waited so long. I now have learned that cervical cancer can be deadly if not treated correctly. I have also learned that HPV can cause other types of cancer like, throat, and anal cancers that affect men directly.

I have learned that because it can spread through sexual activity, people are not as careful, and do not know the risks.

I now hope to be an advocate for young men and boys who feel they do not need the vaccine, because I have now learned that an HPV vaccine is for everyone, and will keep their bodies safe and thriving.

As a young woman I feel that staying up to date with vaccines is very important.