



HPV and Oral Health Fact Sheet

FOR PROVIDERS

OCTOBER 2017

The Challenge...

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that from 2009 to 2013, about 39,800 HPV-associated cancers occurred in the United States each year.¹ The HPV vaccine can prevent most of these cancers, however, nationwide, 40% of girls and 60% of boys were still unvaccinated in 2015.²

What you need to know...

About 79 million Americans are currently infected with some type of HPV and 14 million people in the United States become newly infected each year. HPV infection of the tonsils can cause cancer in many areas of the head, neck, nose, and throat.³ Men, aged 40 and over are at increased risk, and have the highest incidence of oropharyngeal (OP) cancer.⁴ HPV-16 is the strain of HPV shown to most increase the risk for OP cancers.⁵

Most people with oral HPV infections have no symptoms and therefore do not realize that they are infected and can transmit the virus to a partner.³ Although most individuals that have been exposed to HPV resolve the virus on their own, a certain percentage of the population experiences an ongoing infection that can lead to a greater risk of OP cancers. This form of cancer can be difficult to detect due to the complicated anatomy of the oropharynx. Dental professionals can be key in emphasizing the importance of receiving HPV vaccines.

Ways You Can Help...

- Perform regular intraoral and extraoral head and neck examinations, and provide information to your patient on the HPV oral thoracic cancer risk factors.
- In the United States, routine vaccination against HPV is recommended for 11-12 year olds, females through age 26, and males through age 21 who have not been previously vaccinated, and for men who have sex with men through age 26.⁶
- It is recommended that boys and girls receive two doses of HPV vaccine at 11 or 12 years old. Young men (up to age 21) and women (up to age 26), and males who have sex with other men who were not vaccinated as preteens or teens, can complete the 3-dose HPV vaccine series.⁶

Signs and symptoms that are specific to HPV-positive oral cancer:

- Having trouble swallowing
- Coughing up blood
- A lump on the neck or in the cheek
- Hoarseness that does not go away



Footnotes:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/statistics/index.htm>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2015/p0730-hpv.html>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/questions-answers.html>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/cancer.html>
5. https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/basic_info/hpv_oropharyngeal.htm
6. <https://www.cancer.gov/news-events/cancer-currents-blog/2016/hpv-vaccine-doses>

For more information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/index.html>
<https://aidsetc.org/blog/prevention-early-detection-oral-cancer-professional-responsibility>
<http://www.astdd.org/docs/human-papilloma-virus-and-oropharyngeal-cancer-white-paper.pdf>
<https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/screening.html>
<https://www.nationalahec.org/programs/CEPlanningMaterials/Flyers/Connecticut.pdf>

Or, contact Office of Oral Health

Phone: 860-509-8251 Email: dph.officefororalhealth@ct.gov