



HPV: HEAD, NECK, AND ORAL CANCERS

According to the American Dental Association, there are 14 million new cases of Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection each year. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that HPV spreads by intimate skin-to-skin contact. The CDC has recognized more than 40 types of HPV, but most of these kinds do not harm the body and are processed through the immune system without any negative health consequences¹.

According to the CDC, approximately 7 percent of people have a form of oral HPV. However, only 1 percent of people have HPV that causes head and neck cancers. Seventy percent of oropharynx cancers are caused by HPV, and men are four times more likely to contract HPV than women.

Head and neck cancer symptoms

Head and neck cancers that have developed as a result of HPV typically develop in the back of the throat and/or tonsils. Early detection of these cancers is associated with better outcomes.

Symptoms of head and neck cancers caused by HPV include a sore throat, lumps, difficulty speaking, swallowing, chewing, or moving your jaw; pain in the mouth or lips, and a sore that does not heal.

Schedule an appointment with your dentist if you are experiencing the above symptoms for longer than two weeks. Ask your dentist about receiving an oral cancer screening. Your dentist can provide you with information about throat, mouth, tonsils, and tongue cancer.

HPV vaccine

According to the American Dental Association, the HPV vaccine is a safe method to lower the risk of HPV infections. Lowering the risk of HPV infections lowers the risk of developing throat and mouth cancers.

The CDC recommends that 11 to 12-year-old boys and girls get two doses of HPV vaccine to prevent cervical and other less common genital cancers.

Young adults and teens age 15 to 26 are recommended to receive three doses of the HPV vaccine. Adults up to the age of 45 are eligible to receive the HPV vaccination.

24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

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Vaccines can be administered as early as the age of 9, and according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, over 170 million doses have been administered.²

After the vaccination, there may be pain or redness in the arm, and fainting is more common among adolescents. Patients are monitored for about 15 minutes.

For more information about throat and mouth cancer, visit the Division of Public Health, Cancer Prevention and Control Program:

<https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/dpc/cancer.html>

For more information about vaccines, visit the Division of Public Health, Immunization Program: <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dph/dpc/immunize.html>.

For information about the HPV vaccine, visit the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/public/index.html>.

For more information about oral health, contact the Division of Public Health, Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services, at 302-622-4540 and www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html.

Resources

1. American Dental Association. 2020. *HPV: Head, Neck and Oral Cancers*. In Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 17, 2020 from <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/h/hpv-and-oral-cancer>
2. American Dental Association. 2020. *HPV Vaccine and Oral Health*. In Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 17, 2020 from <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/h/hpv-vaccine>