

HPV, Oral Sex and Oral Cancer: A (not so) New Epidemic

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CDC Estimates....

- Nearly 80 million Americans have HPV and 14 million new infections occur annually
- Why do we care?
- Because they are preventable



Oral & Oropharyngeal Cancer Estimates: 2017

- 49,750 new cases
- 9,750 deaths
- Over 50% of these attributed to HPV-16
- 43% of cases are diagnosed at late stages
- In the 1990s and early 2000s annual incidence was about 30,000 – it is an epidemic



HPV Infections

- Most common sexually transmitted infections in the US
- Anyone who has ever been sexually active—vaginal, anal, or oral—can get HPV.
- CDC estimates that more than 90% of sexually active men and 80% of women will be infected with at least one type of HPV during their life
- Most HPV infections go away within a year or two and do not cause cancer. Persistent infections with high-risk HPV types can lead to cell changes and cancer.




HPV Infections Cont'd

- HPV-16 is a well known cause of oropharyngeal cancers —throat, soft palate, base of tongue and tonsils.
- In recent decades there has been a dramatic increase in HPV related oral cancers.
- 65% of cervical, 35% of penile, 95% of anal and 50% of vulva cancers are caused by HPV—most are type 16.



Can You Get Cancer from Oral Sex?

- Oral sex increases risk of head and neck cancers by 22%
 - Those with 6 or more oral sex partners are nearly 9 times more likely than those who never had oral sex to get oral cancer.
 - If you have HPV and use tobacco and alcohol your risk of developing oral/throat cancer is increased.
 - You can have an HPV infection *sans* symptoms and contact with the infected person was many years ago.
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Symptoms

- Red (erythroplakia) or white (leukoplakia) lesions
- Any mouth sores that do not heal
- Hoarseness
- Consistent sore throat
- Pain when swallowing/difficulty swallowing
- Pain when chewing
- A lump in the neck



Prevention

- Get HPV vaccine; have your children vaccinated
- Urge patients to have their children vaccinated
- Stop/reduce use of tobacco and alcohol
- Limit number of sexual partners
- Practice safe sex – use condoms or dental dams
- Have an oral cancer examination!



Vaccines

- FDA approved 3 vaccines to prevent HPV
Gardasil, Gardasil 9 and Cervarix
- All 3 protect against HPV 16 & 18
- As of October 2016, only Gardasil 9 is available*
- HPV vaccine is expensive BUT
 - covered with most insurance including Medicaid
- Merck (Gardasil/ Gardasil 9) provides G9 for free to 19-26 year olds who live in US & have no insurance: www.merckhelps.com/gardasil%209



Who Should be Vaccinated?

- Children/youth 9-14 years of age, both males and females – 2 doses six months apart
- Females 13-26 years and males 13-21 years not previously vaccinated—3 doses
- Males who have sex with males & immunocompromised persons if not previously vaccinated through age 26
- Recall—this vaccine does NOT protect against other STDs;
- No evidence, YET, it prevents oral/throat cancers



Low Vaccination Rates: This is the Epidemic

- 6/10 girls have started the series*
- 5/10 boys have started the series

- Providers have not been overly active in urging parents to have their children vaccinated
- Dental providers have limited knowledge and desire to initiate conversations with parents
- Parents are not well informed about the need for this vaccine



Bottom line

- Neither parents, children/youth can take advantage of this highly effective vaccine if they do not understand what is and what it does.
- That's our job to increase their health literacy
- And we need to keep informed because the research is evolving....



Thank you!

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