

Tips for Talking about HPV at the Dentist

Although dentists and hygienists know the importance of oral cancer screenings and the role HPV vaccination plays in cancer prevention, it can be difficult to know how to talk about it.

HOW DO I START THE CONVERSATION?

“Did you know that your pediatrician recommends a vaccine that can prevent HPV, and that HPV can cause cancer? Your child is the right age to be vaccinated. It’s time to ask your pediatrician about it.”

PARENTS MAY ASK...

What is HPV?



YOUR ANSWER...

HPV (human papillomavirus) is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the USA. It can cause genital warts and many types of cancer, including oral and cervical.

PARENTS MAY ASK...

How common is HPV and HPV-related cancer?



YOUR ANSWER...

Nearly everyone will have HPV in their lifetime, usually with no symptoms or treatment needed. But HPV does cause 31,000 cancer cases each year in the USA, about 11,000 of which are oral cancers.

PARENTS MAY ASK....

Why is it important now?



YOUR ANSWER...

If administered before age 15, the immune response is so strong that boys and girls only need a 2 shot series. After age 15, they need 3 shots to have the same response and protection.

PARENTS MAY ASK...

Is the vaccine safe?



YOUR ANSWER....

Over 170 million doses of the HPV vaccine have been given and no serious safety concerns identified. The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site.

PARENTS MAY ASK...

Is the vaccine effective?



YOUR ANSWER...

The vaccine protects against the types of HPV that cause oral cancers. Studies show that the majority of cervical and anal cancers and up to 90% of genital warts can be prevented with the vaccine.

PARENTS MAY ASK...

Who needs the vaccine and how much does it cost?



YOUR ANSWER...

All boys and girls ages 11-12 should be vaccinated. Like other vaccines for children in Massachusetts, it is universally covered regardless of insurance.



For more information about HPV-related cancers and cancer prevention, contact Team Maureen.

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