

TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT HPV WITH PARENTS AND PATIENTS AT THE DENTAL OFFICE

The HPV vaccine can help prevent cancers of the head and neck. This tip sheet is meant to help dental professionals talk with parents and patients about the HPV vaccine.

WHAT CAN I SAY TO PARENTS AND PATIENTS ABOUT THE HPV VACCINE?

"The HPV vaccine can help prevent cancers of the head and neck. The HPV vaccine is recommended for both males and females, and your child is the right age to get the vaccine. Talk with your child's doctor about it."

PARENTS MAY ASK...	YOUR ANSWER...
What is HPV?	HPV (human papillomavirus) is a very common virus that almost everyone will have at some time in their lives. It can cause several types of cancer, including head/neck and cervical cancers.
How common is HPV?	Nearly everyone will have HPV in their lifetime and may never even know it.
What is the most common HPV-related cancer?	In Vermont, the most common HPV-related cancer occurs in the head and neck, and it is most common in men.
Why are you—a dental professional—talking to me about the vaccine?	More and more people in the U.S. and Vermont are getting head and neck cancers caused by HPV. I want to make sure my patients know that there is a vaccine to help prevent these cancers.
Why is the vaccine important now?	Children's immune response is stronger when they're younger. Before age 15, they only need two doses of the vaccine. Once they turn 15, they need three doses.
Is the vaccine safe?	Yes. The vaccine's safety has been tracked for years, and research shows it's safe. The most common side effect is soreness where the vaccine was given.
Is the vaccine effective?	Yes. The vaccine protects against the most common types of HPV that cause cancer. It is expected to prevent over 90% of cancer cases caused by HPV.
Who needs the vaccine?	All boys and girls should get the HPV vaccine. Doctors recommend getting the vaccine at ages 11-12. The vaccine is approved for females 9-26 years old, males 9-21 years old, and males 22-26 years old who have certain risk factors.
How much does the vaccine cost?	The Vermont Department of Health Immunization Program provides HPV vaccine for use in those 9-26 years of age at no costs to all enrolled Vermont primary care providers. If a person lacks insurance or access to a health provider offering the vaccine, they may be vaccinated at a local health offices. For location: http://www.healthvermont.gov/local
I'm still not sure about the vaccine. What should I do?	Write your questions and concerns down and talk with your child's doctor.

INCORPORATING HPV VACCINATION STATUS IN YOUR PRACTICE'S **PATIENT HEALTH HISTORY**

In 2012, the American Dental Association released a Statement regarding HPV and oropharyngeal cancers, stating that "...dental care providers should learn about and should educate patients about HPV and its connection to this type of cancer.¹"

One simple way for dental health providers to bring this topic up in conversation is by asking about HPV vaccination status as part of a comprehensive patient health history.² By asking about HPV vaccination status, patients and parents will begin to understand its connection to oral health and be prepared for you to discuss HPV vaccination as part of your preventive health recommendations.

If you already ask about vaccinations as part of your health history form, simply add HPV to the list or use the same language as with the other vaccines. If you do not ask about other vaccinations, here is some sample language that you could use:

[Have you/Has your child] received the HPV (Human Papillomavirus) Vaccine?

Yes- Completed all shots.

Yes- Started but have not completed all shots.

No- Have not received any shots

By asking this question, you can now tailor your recommendations. For a patient who has started but not completed the HPV vaccine series, you can commend them for taking the first step to prevent cancer and encourage them to visit their primary care provider for their other dose(s).

1. American Dental Association Council on Scientific Affairs (2012). "Statement on Human Papillomavirus and Squamous Cell Cancers of the Oropharynx." Available at: <https://www.ada.org/en/about-the-ada/ada-positions-policies-and-statements/statement-on-human-papillomavirus-and-squamous-cel>

2. Wagner, R. and A. Villa (2017). "Oral HPV Infections and the Role of the Dental Professional." Journal of the Massachusetts Dental Society 65(4): 12-15.