



## **Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and Your Oral Health**

### **What is Human Papillomavirus?**

HPV, or human papillomavirus, is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States and can cause genital warts and, later in life, six types of cancers. HPV is linked with 70% of mouth and throat-related cancers.

There are vaccines that can stop these health problems from happening. Boys and girls should get two doses of HPV vaccine 6 to 12 months apart at age 11 or 12 to prevent HPV infections from causing cancers in the mouth, throat.

- HPV refers to a group of more than 150 virus strains.
- It is possible to be infected with multiple strains of HPV.
- About 79 million Americans are currently infected with HPV.
- About 14 million people become newly infected each year.
  
- HPV is so common that almost every person who is sexually active will get HPV at some time in their life if they don't get an HPV vaccine.

### **How does the HPV virus spread?**

HPV can be present in the body of an infected person and spread to others even when the infected person does not have HPV symptoms (asymptomatic).

- The HPV virus is spread mainly by intimate skin-to-skin contact during vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus.
- Transmission from an infected mother to a newborn during childbirth can happen, but it is rare.

In most cases, HPV goes away on its own and does not cause health problems. However, each year, HPV causes about 35,800 new cases of cancer.

HPV is linked with 91% of cervical and anal cancers. Every year, nearly 11,000 women living in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cervical cancer, and more than 4,000 women die, even with effective screening and treatment. HPV can also cause other cancers, including cancer of the vulva, penis, and back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils, as well as genital warts.

### **How can I prevent getting HPV?**

You can do several things to lower your chances.

- *Get vaccinated.* The HPV vaccine is safe and effective. **For specific information about the HPV vaccine recommendations, look [here](#).**
  - ✓ The vaccine can be given to boys and girls as early as age 9 and for everyone through age 26, although the vaccine is most effective when given at a younger age.
  - ✓ The HPV vaccine can prevent more than 90% of HPV-related cancers when given at the recommended ages.
  - ✓ The Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) endorses promotion of the HPV vaccine to reduce the risk of HPV related mouth and throat cancers (oropharyngeal cancers).
  - ✓ Some adults age 27 through 45, who have never been vaccinated, may decide to get HPV vaccine after speaking with their doctor about their risk for new HPV infections and the possible benefits of vaccination. HPV vaccination in this age range provides less benefit, as more people have already been exposed to HPV.
- Get screened for cervical cancer.
- If you are sexually active, the use of latex condoms every time you have sex can lower your chances of getting HPV. However, condoms do not fully protect since areas not covered by the condom can be infected.
- Have a sexual relationship with someone who is only having sex with you. However, even persons with only one lifetime sex partner can get HPV.

### Where can I get more information?

- [STD information](#)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/STD/>
- [HPV Information](#)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/index.html>
- [Cervical Cancer Screening](#)  
[https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical/basic\\_info/screening.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical/basic_info/screening.htm)
- [CDC's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program](#)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/>
- STD information and referrals to STD Clinics  
CDC-INFO  
1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)  
TTY: 1-888-232-6348  
[In English, en Español](#)
- [CDC National Prevention Information Network \(NPIN\)](#)  
E-mail: [npin-info@cdc.gov](mailto:npin-info@cdc.gov)
- [American Sexual Health Association \(ASHA\)](#)[external icon](#)  
Email: [info@ashasexualhealth.org](mailto:info@ashasexualhealth.org)

## Resources

ASTDD, Where Oral Health Lives, White Paper: Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and Oropharyngeal Cancer

<https://www.astdd.org/docs/human-papilloma-virus-and-oropharyngeal-cancer-white-paper.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/public/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/male-condom-use.html>

Oral Cancer Foundation

[https://oralcancerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/HPV\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](https://oralcancerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/HPV_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

Healthline

<https://www.healthline.com/health/human-papillomavirus-infection#causes>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm>