

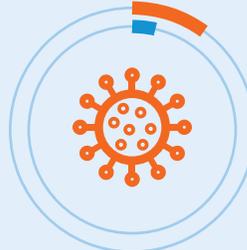
# Discussing HPV and Detecting Oral Cancer

## The Role of Oral Health Providers

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that is linked to cancers of the mouth and throat. Oral health providers have an opportunity to play a key role in educating patients about the link between HPV and cancers of the mouth and throat as well as discussing the importance of the HPV vaccine in the prevention of oral disease.



HPV can cause cancers of the mouth and throat, and it is estimated that **70%** of oropharyngeal cancers are caused by HPV.<sup>1</sup>



HPV is the most common STI in the United States (US); the prevalence of HPV is **10% in males and 3.6% in females.**<sup>1</sup>



There has been an estimated **four- to fivefold increase** in the number of cancers of the mouth and throat over the last 10 years in the US.<sup>2</sup>



The HPV vaccine can prevent **more than 90%** of the six types of cancer caused by HPV, including cancers of the mouth and throat (as well as cancers of the cervix, vagina, vulva, penis, and anus),<sup>3</sup> when both doses\* of the vaccine are received.<sup>4</sup>



Results from the nationally representative [State of Oral Health Equity in America \(SOHEA\)](#) survey show that **more than three-quarters (77.5%)** of adults think that **the HPV vaccine is very or somewhat important in preventing cancers of the mouth and throat.**

**Four out of five (80.1%)** adults believe that cancer of the mouth and throat is linked to the health of their teeth, mouth, and gums.

There is a growing body of evidence that **many oral health providers feel confident discussing HPV with patients** and are willing to administer HPV vaccines if allowed to by law.<sup>5</sup>



**Adolescents with a dental visit in the previous year were significantly more likely to have received an HPV vaccination** than those without a dental visit. Of those adolescents who had a dental visit but were not vaccinated, 12.5% had not had a medical visit within the previous year. These findings emphasize the existing role of oral health providers in educating adolescent patients and their parents or caregivers on the importance of HPV vaccination, as well as the potential for more oral health providers to take on this role.<sup>6</sup>



**The majority of adults (81.7%)** surveyed in the [SOHEA survey](#) are **comfortable with the prospect of their oral health provider conducting an oral cancer screening** during their dental visit.



**More than half of adults (54.1%)** surveyed think that **oral health care providers are qualified to educate patients about the HPV vaccine**. However, only 5% of adults say that an oral health provider has ever discussed the HPV vaccine with them during a dental visit.

Oral health providers who are interested in [discussing HPV and HPV vaccinations](#) with patients, parents, and caregivers can **visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website** for recommendations about these conversations.



\*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children aged 11–12 years receive two doses of the HPV vaccine, and that adolescents who receive their first dose on or after their 15th birthday should receive three doses. Furthermore, individuals up to age 26 should receive the HPV vaccine if they were not vaccinated earlier (<https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/hcp/schedules-recommendations.html>).

#### References:

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2. "Human HPV and Throat/Oral Cancer Frequently Asked Questions," Mount Sinai, accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.mountsinai.org/locations/head-neck-institute/cancer/oral/hpv-faqs>.
3. "Cancers Caused by HPV," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/cancer.html>.
4. CareQuest Institute for Oral Health. *A Vaccine Can Prevent Throat Cancer: Key Facts About Human Papillomavirus (HPV)*. Boston, MA: October 2020.
5. Denise Guadiana, Nolan M. Kavanagh, and Cristiane H. Squarize, "Oral Health Care Professionals Recommending and Administering the HPV Vaccine: Understanding the Strengths and Assessing the Barriers," *PLOS ONE* 16, no. 3 (2021): e0248047.
6. Megan Cloidt, Abigail Kelly, Madhuli Thakkar-Samtani, Eric P. Tranby, Julie Frantsve-Hawley, Parth D. Shah, Nadia Laniado, and Victor Badner, "Identifying the Utility of Dental Providers in Human Papillomavirus Prevention Efforts: Results from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2015–2018," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 70, no. 4 (2022): 571-576.

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