

HPV Fact Sheet for Dentists and Dental Patients

HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections in Canada and worldwide. It is estimated that as many as 75% of sexually active men and women will have at least one anogenital HPV infection in their lifetime, but most people with healthy immune systems will eventually clear the infection from their bodies.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

HPV (human papilloma virus) is a group of viruses that can cause warts in various parts of the body, particularly the genital and head and neck areas. Some types of HPV are known to cause cancer.

Low-risk HPV
Commonly cause warts or papillomas in the mouth, throat or genitals.



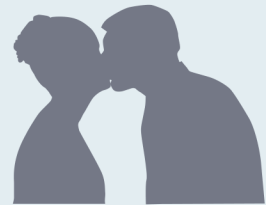
High-risk HPV
Can cause cancers of the oropharynx (throat) and anogenital regions (anus, cervix, vagina, vulva in women; anus and penis in men).

Who is at risk for HPV related oropharyngeal cancer (OPC)?

- HPV-related OPC is more common in men (4:1 male to female ratio)
- Typical presentation is in the early to mid-50s
- High risk groups include those with early sexual debut, a large number of lifetime oral sex partners and partners of individuals who that have a known HPV-related cancer
- While marijuana may increase risk of developing these HPV-related OPC, many patients lack a tobacco smoking history

How is HPV transmitted?

HPV infection is very common. Most HPV is transmitted sexually, but it can also be passed through other contact, such as kissing or childbirth.



Is HPV Common?

- HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease. Nearly all men and women will get some type of HPV at some point in their lives.
- In most cases, the virus is cleared by the body's immune system.
- When the virus is not cleared (1-2% of cases), the persistence of the virus can put people at risk for the development of papillomas (low-risk HPV) or cancer (high-risk HPV).

What is oropharyngeal cancer (OPC)?

- Most HPV types do not cause any health problems, but 12 types are known to cause cancer.
- HPV-related OPCs most commonly arise in base of tongue and tonsillar region of the throat.
- Cancer in the other regions of the oropharynx (soft palate, uvula, and walls of the throat) commonly are caused by non-HPV-related factors, such as tobacco and alcohol.



HPV is a leading cause of the ongoing increase in incidence in head and neck cancers.



For Approx. 1-2 of every 100 people, the virus stays and has a chance to cause cancer

- Only for high-risk types
- Takes from 10-30 years or more years to get throat cancer

How does an HPV-related OPC present?

The most common presentation for an HPV-related oropharyngeal cancer is a painless lump in the neck, which is a lymph node harboring the disease.

Common Symptoms Include::

- Sore throat
- Sensation of something stuck in throat
- Ear pain
- Pain with swallowing
- Trouble swallowing
- Change in voice

Diagnosis can be accomplished by:

- Fine needle aspiration of the involved lymph node
- Endoscopic evaluation
- Biopsy of the oropharynx by an otolaryngologist
- If no obvious tumor can be found, tonsil tissue in the throat may need to be removed in an attempt to find the cancer

How can HPV-related OPC be prevented?

- Avoid infection with high-risk HPV. This can be done by avoiding exposure through safe sex practices.
- HPV vaccination also reduces the risk of contracting the virus in select populations.

Signs you may have HPV-related throat cancer:

- Painless neck lump for more than 2 weeks
- Pain or problems swallowing
- Throat pain or ear pain
- Changes in your voice

How is HPV-related OPC treated?

- Involves surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy, either alone, or in combination with each other.
- Can result in significant short- and long-term side effects such as difficulty swallowing, change in speech, taste disturbance, dryness of the mouth and throat.
- A team of head and neck cancer specialists will determine the best treatment combination for patients based on the extent of the cancer and will result in least amount of side effects.

Who Should get the HPV Vaccine?

HPV vaccination has shown a decrease of 88% in persistent oral HPV infections. As experts in oral health, the HPV Vaccine is within a dentist's scope of practice as both head and neck cancers and oral papillomas are often identified by dentists and can be caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). By taking a role in HPV vaccination dentists are leaders to all health professions and make a significant impact on public health.

Health Canada has authorized three vaccines to prevent infections from the most common types of HPV: Gardasil®, Gardasil®9 (for females and males) and Cervarix® (for females only).

HPV Prevention

- Get the HPV Vaccination
- Use safe sex practices
- Avoid high numbers of sexual partners
- Use barrier protection, such as condoms

