

ORAL AND OROPHARYNGEAL CANCER: TALKING TIPS FOR PARENTS



The following can help answer some common questions from parents about HPV and oral cancers.

Why does my child need the HPV vaccine?

Most people will be exposed to HPV during their life. Vaccination can protect your child from several types of HPV-related cancers².

Can't we wait until they are older?

While the HPV vaccine is recommended for everyone, providing the vaccination in the school programs is most effective when given between the ages of 11 and 12, before your child is exposed to HPV.

The best time to get the HPV vaccine is during the school program when your child is in Grade 6. This is because children have a much stronger immune response and will provide the most robust immune protection². There are catch-up programs offered in Grade 9 just in case you missed vaccination day!

Don't worry if you did not get the opportunity to be vaccinated as a child, just talk to your family doctor, nurse practitioner, dentist, or pharmacist to get the information you need to make the decision that is right for you.

Does the vaccine really work?

Yes, studies continue to prove the HPV vaccine works extremely well and protects against 6 different types of cancers. There has been a significant decrease in the number of infections and pre-cancerous conditions in young people, especially girls, since the vaccine was introduced in Alberta in 2008.

I thought the HPV vaccine was only for girls?

The HPV virus does not differentiate between genders or identifications. We all can be infected and infect our sex partners. High risk HPV can cause six different kinds of cancer, including oropharyngeal and genital cancers in both males and females².

How much does the vaccine cost?

Alberta Health covers the cost of the HPV vaccine up until age 26 for Alberta residents⁸. Some private health insurance plans may cover the cost of the HPV vaccine. Check with your health benefit provider.

I'm worried about the safety of the vaccine. Do you think it is safe?

Yes, the HPV vaccination is very safe. There may be some soreness at the injection site, like any other shot. Over 200 million doses of the HPV vaccine have been given globally, and no serious adverse effects have been reported found.

