

## Human Papillomavirus Vaccine and Head and Neck Cancer

### What Is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common viral infection that affects the skin and surfaces of the mouth and genitals. Human papillomavirus is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the US. Many people infected with HPV have no symptoms and never know they have HPV.

There are over 100 different types of HPV. Some people who have been exposed to HPV will develop warts on the skin, throat, or genitals. Other types of HPV may cause cervical, anal, penile, vulvar, and oropharyngeal cancer. Most people who are infected with HPV recover from the infection on their own. However, some people continue to carry HPV in their body for years after the initial infection. This increases the chance that they will develop certain types of cancer. Unfortunately, there is no cure for HPV infection.

### What Is Oropharyngeal Cancer?

The oropharynx includes the throat, the tonsils, and the back of the tongue. When HPV infects the oropharynx it may cause a cancer called oropharyngeal cancer. Human papillomavirus infection is the most common cause of oropharyngeal cancer.

People usually develop HPV-related oropharyngeal cancer in their 40s or 50s. Unlike other forms of throat cancer, this type is not related to smoking. Signs and symptoms of oropharyngeal cancer can include sore throat, ear pain, changes to the voice, pain with swallowing, neck swelling, and unexplained weight loss.

### How Do I Prevent Oropharyngeal Cancer?

There is a vaccine that prevents HPV infection. This vaccine is recommended for all people between the ages of 9 and 45 years.

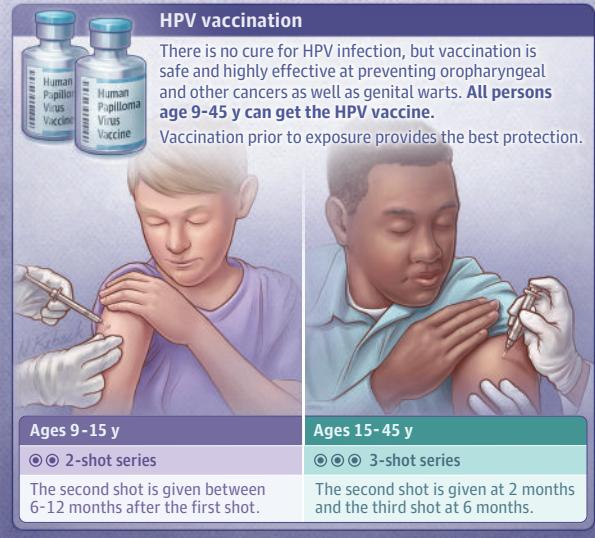
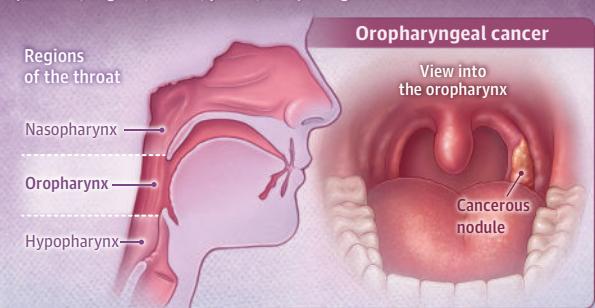
### What Is the HPV Vaccine?

Research has shown that the HPV vaccine prevents HPV infection in the mouth and throat, which decreases the risk of HPV oropharyngeal cancer. Vaccination is recommended in childhood so that people develop protection from HPV before they are sexually active. Even if you are already sexually active, the vaccine may protect you from HPV-related cancers. Unfortunately, many people who are eligible for the vaccine still have not received it. This is especially true of young boys and men.

### Is the HPV Vaccine Safe?

Patients have been receiving HPV vaccines for more than 10 years. They have been shown to be safe and effective. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends receiving the HPV vaccine to prevent oropharyngeal cancer. The most common adverse ef-

**Human papillomavirus (HPV)** is a common virus spread through skin, mouth, or genital contact. HPV infection is the most common cause of oropharyngeal (throat) cancer, but can also lead to other cancers (cervical, vaginal, vulvar, penile, anal) and genital warts.



fects include pain at the injection site, headaches, and generalized soreness. The FDA recommends vaccination of all people between the ages of 9 to 45 years.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control.

[https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/basic\\_info/hpv\\_oropharyngeal.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/basic_info/hpv_oropharyngeal.htm)

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/hcp/recommendations.html>

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