

Talking about HPV with Parents: A Guide for Dental Offices

Dentists and dental hygienists have a key opportunity to start talking with parents about oral cancer screenings and the role HPV vaccination plays in cancer prevention.

HOW DO I START THE CONVERSATION?

“Did you know doctors recommend a vaccine that can prevent cancers caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV)? Your child is the right age to be vaccinated. Now’s the perfect time to ask your doctor about it.”

PARENTS MAY ASK...

What is HPV?



YOUR ANSWER...

HPV (human papillomavirus) is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the US. It can cause genital warts and many types of cancer, including cancers of the back of the throat (oropharyngeal) and cervical.

PARENTS MAY ASK...

How common is HPV and HPV cancer?



YOUR ANSWER...

Nearly everyone will get HPV in their lifetime. Most people won't have symptoms or need treatment. But HPV causes 34,800 cancer cases each year in the US, of which 13,500 are cancers of the back of the throat.

PARENTS MAY ASK...

Why is it important now?



YOUR ANSWER...

If the first dose of HPV vaccine is given before age 15, the immune response is so strong that children only need 2 doses. If the first dose is started after age 15, they need 3 doses.

PARENTS MAY ASK...

Is the vaccine safe?



YOUR ANSWER...

Over 270 million doses of the HPV vaccine have been given worldwide. No serious safety concerns have been identified. The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site.

PARENTS MAY ASK...

Is the vaccine effective?



YOUR ANSWER...

Studies show that the HPV vaccine can prevent the majority of cervical and anal cancers, and up to 90% of genital warts. It may also prevent oral HPV infections that are linked to cancers of the back of the throat (oropharyngeal).

PARENTS MAY ASK...

Who needs the vaccine and how much does it cost?



YOUR ANSWER...

All children age 11-12 should be vaccinated, or start as early as age 9. In Washington, the HPV vaccine is provided at no cost through age 18, regardless of insurance status.

Adapted with permission For more information about HPV cancers and prevention, contact the Washington State Department of Health.



www.TeamMaureen.org

www.doh.wa.gov/immunization
OICP@doh.wa.gov
PO Box 47843, Olympia, WA 98504



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