

HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter
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HPV Vaccination

Introduction

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a group of viruses that can lead to cancer. These viruses are transmitted through intimate contact and skin-to-skin contact. According to the CDC, HPV is so common that “nearly all men and women get it at some point in their lives” and “about one in four” are currently infected. In most cases, HPV goes away and does not cause health problems. However, when it does not go away, it can lead to warts and even cancer. HPV cancers can be of the reproductive organs or oropharyngeal cancers. The CDC states that each year, “HPV causes 33,700 cancers in men and women” and the “vaccination can prevent most of these cancers from ever developing.” Recent research has led to new recommendations by the CDC, FDA, and ADA pertaining to prophylactic vaccination as well.

Signs of HPV Infection

According to the Mayo Clinic, the immune system usually defeats an HPV infection before it causes symptoms. Thus, many people who have contracted an HPV infection often do not know it and can spread it.

HPV often manifests as various types of papillomas, or warts, depending on the virus. Warts that can appear due to HPV include genital warts, common warts, plantar warts, and flat warts. These warts can present on or inside of the mouth, on the feet or hands, or around genital areas. It is recommended to see a doctor if any warts cause discomfort or pain. It is also important to note that warts from an HPV infection are contagious and can be spread by contact with a wart or even something that touched the wart.

Cancer is another product of HPV infection. According to

the CDC, cancer can take years or decades to develop after contraction of HPV.

New Recommendations

Recently, the American Dental Association (ADA) has adopted a policy on vaccination for the prevention of oral HPV infection and cancers. The American Cancer Society projects over “50,00 new cases of oral and oropharyngeal cancers in 2018, of which 70 to 80 percent will be attributable to HPV.” According to the ADA, the proportion of oropharyngeal cancers is increasing significantly, particularly in white males, age 40 to 59. HPV infection is now considered a risk factor for oropharyngeal cancer, along with older age, the use of tobacco, and excessive alcohol consumption. There is also evidence of a recent increase in prevalence of these cancers in younger, non-smokers, and non-drinkers. Due to this, the ADA

is suggesting prophylactic HPV vaccination.

Who should Vaccinate?

CDC guidelines state that the following should be vaccinated:

- Children age 11-12
- Any teen that did not receive the vaccination by age 11-12
- Young women up to age 26
- Young men up to age 21
- Young men who identify as gay or bisexual through age 26
- Young adults who are transgender through age 26
- Young adults with immunocompromising conditions through age 26

The FDA also recently approved the HPV vaccination to include men and women age 27 to 45 to prevent related diseases and cancers. There is potential for utilization of this vaccine prior to becoming infected with HPV to “prevent more than 90 percent of these cancers.” In addition, the new recommendations by the ADA increase this list to include those who may be at risk for certain oropharyngeal

cancers. Ask your dentist for more information about this.

Those at higher risk for contraction of HPV viruses include those with multiple sexual partners, adolescents and young adults, those with weakened immune systems, those with damaged skin, and those in contact with someone or something that has contacted an HPV papilloma.

Essentially, men and women age 11-45 are encouraged to receive the HPV vaccination. Contact your doctor to inquire about HPV and whether you or your children should receive the vaccination.

The Vaccine

Gardasil 9 was approved by the FDA in 2016 and found to be safe and effective in preventing HPV infection and certain cancers. According to the CDC, HPV infections that can cause cancer and genital warts have dropped 71 percent since introduction of the vaccine. Unfortunately, the HPV vaccination is vastly underutilized. And, according to the ADA, “the single best predictor” of HPV vaccination “is a recommendation from a trusted health care professional.” It is important to increase awareness of this issue and to utilize the HPV vaccination prophylactically.

It is also important to know that the vaccine cannot cure current HPV infection or

cancer. For more information, contact your primary care provider, pharmacist, dentist, or local health department.

References

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Other News

**If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at hanrahan@astate.edu.

The Arkansas State University Employee Wellness Newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Health questions can be addressed to Dean Susan Hanrahan, Ph.D., ext. 3112 or hanrahan@astate.edu. Produced by Katie Sellers, graduate student in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Physical Therapy Program.