



Indiana
Department
of
Health

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Spotlight

Oral Cancer Awareness Month

Human papillomavirus (HPV) related cases of oropharyngeal cancer are increasing. Moreover, due to HPV infection, head and neck cancers are occurring in those whom the typical risk factors of cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption may not be present.¹

April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month. Help make sure oral cancer screenings are a part of your dental exam routine. This is especially important since head and neck cancers still occur in those in whom the typical risk factors of cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption may not be present.¹

¹: [American Dental Association](#)

How Does HPV Relate To Oral Cancer?

HPV is a very common virus with nearly 80 million people currently infected in the United States. HPV can cause cancer in the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils (called oropharyngeal cancer). HPV is thought to cause 70% of oropharyngeal cancers in the United States. Per the CDC, HPV vaccination could prevent more than 90% of cancers caused by HPV from ever developing, including oral cancers. Dental professionals can help by recommending HPV vaccination to their patients.²Dental professionals can additionally play a vital role in cancer prevention by recommending HPV vaccination to their patients between the ages of 9 and 45.²

Visit this CDC link for HPV recommendations: [CLICK THIS LINK](#)

²: [CDC Oral Health](#)

Signs and Symptoms

- A painless but swollen tonsil on just one side
- Difficulty swallowing or chewing
- A sore on the lip or in the mouth that doesn't heal
- Trouble moving the jaw or tongue
- Voice changes
- A lump or mass in the neck or back of the throat
- Weight loss
- Pain in the ear³

³: [American Cancer Society](#)

Are There Ways to Prevent Oral Cancer?

There is no sure way to prevent cancer of any type but risks can be reduced by:

- Avoiding tobacco and alcohol
- Avoid HPV infection and get vaccinated for HPV
- Get regular dental checkups. Practice good oral hygiene– brush twice a day and floss daily. Have regular dental check-up every six to 12 months.
- The American Cancer Society recommends all children get the HPV vaccine between ages 9 and 12. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommended both females and males get vaccinated up to age 26. However, people can get vaccinated up to age 45 (after talking to their physician).
- Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active⁴

⁴: [American Cancer Society](#)



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