

Oral Cancer: The Reason ALL Young People Should Get the HPV Vaccination

People are not used to getting information on venereal diseases from their dentist, but you need to make an exception. The genital strains of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), as you may know, cause venereal warts, and virtually all cervical cancer. What you don't know is that it is the cause of an increasing number of oral and pharyngeal cancers in young adults. The news is that these may be preventable with Gardasil, the HPV vaccination that is available from your physician.

Oral and pharyngeal (mouth and throat) cancers are not very well known, but some of the people they have killed are. Ulysses Grant, Grover Cleveland, Sigmund Freud, Humphrey Bogart, Lana Turner, Babe Ruth, and Jack Klugman to name a few. Two well known people currently battling oral cancer are rock guitarist Eddie Van Halen and movie reviewer Roger Ebert.

Mouth and throat cancers are common and deadly, killing roughly one person per hour in the U.S. They are the sixth most common cancer world wide and have a poor survival rate as they are often not discovered until late in the disease process. Treatment of oral cancer includes surgery that can be quite disfiguring, for example, the removal of part of a tongue or jawbone.

Historically, most oral cancers have been associated with heavy tobacco and alcohol use and have occurred mostly in older men. What's new is that a growing minority of these cancers are occurring in young adults who do not smoke or drink heavily. What they do have is sexually acquired HPV infection in the mouth.

Gardasil is the vaccine being marketed to help prevent the vast majority of cervical cancers and many cases of venereal warts. The same two strains of HPV that cause most cervical cancers also cause virtually all HPV related cancer of the mouth and throat. The Gardasil immunizes against these two strains as well as two others. It is believed, but not yet proven; that Gardasil should prevent these HPV caused oral cancers.

So how do the oral tissues become infected with HPV? The obvious answer is oral sex, which many young people feel is safe and without consequences. Even if you think your little angel would never do such a thing, consider this. If your little angel spends much time just kissing someone who has, or who has been kissing someone who has, they may well become infected themselves.

It is estimated that 75% of Americans currently between 15 and 49 years old will become infected with genital Human Papilloma Virus in their lifetime. Folks, there is a lot of sex and oral sex going on outside of marriage these days. You don't know who your child will kiss, be intimate with, or marry. Please consider this vaccination as a way to help prevent this terrible disease in both sexes, as well as cervical cancer in females.

Your physician, or pharmacy if it does immunizations, can administer the Gardasil HPV vaccination. Incidentally, the best way to catch oral cancer early, when it is most treatable, is at a dental examination. If you needed another reason to see your dentist, you have one!