

OHNEP Adolescent HPV: Promoting Vaccine Confidence Case Study

HPV is well-known for being the most common sexually transmitted infection in the US, spread through direct sexual contact with genitals and through the mouth by oral sex. Oral HPV is responsible for about 70% of oropharyngeal cancer cases in the U.S., affecting both men and women. Teens who are sexually active are at high risk for HPV and at risk for developing oropharyngeal cancer if an oral HPV infection persists. Education and awareness of the long-term impact of oral HPV is relatively unknown to the general public. Many health practitioners, including physicians, nurse practitioners, midwives, nurses, physician assistants, dentists, pharmacists, and more, are well-positioned to educate their patients on HPV transmission and how to prevent it.

The Gardasil vaccine targets 9 main cancer-causing strains of HPV, and is one of the most effective tools in HPV prevention. ***It is the first FDA-approved cancer prevention vaccine.*** Health providers can administer the vaccine to children young as 9 years old, and catch-up is available for teens and adults up to age 45. Clinicians are usually the first line of defense to educate children and their parents on HPV and oral cancer. Providers may experience vaccine hesitancy on the part of parents of teens whether or not they are sexually active. It is important for all health professionals – nurse practitioners, nurses, dentists, and others – to be well-informed about HPV and be able to address concerns about the Gardasil vaccine.

You are a provider in the primary care clinic.

Eleven-year-old Andrew comes in for his annual sports check-up. He does well in school and has no health problems. He reports that he plays basketball and baseball, does not engage in risky drug behavior, and is not sexually active.

Andrew's father is with him at the appointment, and you recommend administration of the Gardasil vaccine due to his age. Andrew's father is skeptical – Andrew is not sexually active and his father thinks he is not at risk because he is male. You address his concerns and provide information about the vaccine.

Provider: Have you heard about the Gardasil vaccine?

Andrew's Father: No, I haven't.

Provider: The Gardasil vaccine protects against all forms of HPV infection in men and women, and can prevent HPV-associated warts and cancers. Since Andrew is now eleven, I recommend he receive this vaccine.

Andrew's Father: He isn't sexually active.

Provider: The vaccine is a preventive measure and is best administered before teens become sexually active.

Andrew's Father: I also heard that HPV does not occur in boys as often and really only for girls.

Provider: The vaccine prevents all forms of HPV-related cancers, including oral cancers which are most common among men.

Andrew's Father: I don't want him getting an unnecessary vaccine that could make him sick.

Provider: The vaccine is incredibly safe with minor side effects. It is also currently the only long-term cancer prevention vaccine available. Here are some resources for you to review together about HPV and the Gardasil vaccine - why doesn't each of you review these resources? Perhaps you will want to discuss them together. Of course, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. If you decide to pursue getting the vaccine before your next visit, please contact the office for an appointment. Otherwise, I will see you, Andrew, at your next sports checkup.

HPV Vaccine Resources for Teens, Parents and Providers:

[Oral Health and HPV Fact Sheet](#)

[Safe and Sound: The HPV Vaccine](#)

[HPV: Don't Wait. Vaccinate!](#)

[Ways to protect teeth and prevent decay in school-age kids and teens](#)

[CDC HPV Educational Materials](#)

[CDC HPV Vaccine Recommendations](#)

[White Paper: Human Papilloma Virus \(HPV\) and Oropharyngeal Cancer](#)

[Cancer Prevention Through HPV Vaccination: An Action Guide for Dental Health Care Providers](#)

[National HPV Vaccination Roundtable Resource Library](#)

[Preventive Dental Visits for Children and Adolescents Are Important!](#)

[Las visitas odontológicas preventivas para niños y adolescentes son importantes](#)

[Oral Cancer Foundation: HPV Vaccination](#)

[Working with Non-Traditional Partners for Adolescent Oral Health: The Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\) Initiative](#)