

Did You Know HPV Causes Cancer?

HPV triggers abnormal cell growth that can lead to cancers of the cervix, anus, vulva, vagina, penis, mouth and throat.

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More than a quarter of Americans are unaware that human papillomavirus (HPV) causes cervical cancer, and even fewer know it also causes other malignancies. A common sexually transmitted infection, HPV triggers abnormal cell growth that can lead to cancers of the cervix, anus, vulva, vagina, penis, mouth and throat.

Analyzing data from the Health Information National Trends Survey, Eric Adjei Boakye, PhD, of Henry Ford Health, and colleagues found that 70% of people surveyed in 2020 know that HPV causes cervical cancer, down from 78% in 2014. The proportion who know that the virus causes anal, penile and oral cancers was mostly unchanged, at around 30%.

The Gardasil 9 vaccine protects against nine HPV types. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends vaccination for girls and boys at ages 11 or 12, with catch-up vaccines for people up to age 26. The Food and Drug Administration has approved the vaccine for women and men up to age 45.

“We can completely eliminate cervical cancer by getting everyone vaccinated who should be,” says National Cancer Institute director Monica Bertagnolli, MD.
