

Vaccinating boys plays key role in HPV prevention

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Improving vaccination rates against the human papillomavirus (HPV) in boys is key to protecting both men and women, says new research from University of Toronto Professor Peter A. Newman from the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work.

HPV has been linked to anal, penile and certain types of [throat cancers](#) in men. Since the virus is also responsible for various cancers in women, vaccinating boys aged 11 to 21 will play a crucial role in reducing [cancer rates](#) across the sexes.

"HPV is the single most common sexually transmitted infection," says Newman, Canada Research Chair in Health and Social Justice. "But now a [vaccine](#) is available that can change that and help to prevent the cancers that sometimes result."

Newman's research grouped data from 16 separate studies involving more than 5,000 people to analyze rates of HPV vaccine acceptability and examined what factors play a role when determining if young men receive the vaccine.

Vaccinations, particularly new ones, can have difficulty gaining traction among the citizens they were developed to help. This problem can be compounded by a lack of information, misinformation and even [conspiracy theories](#) about the efficacy and safety of vaccines.

Unfortunately, says Newman, misinformation and unfounded vaccine fears can result in cancer deaths that could have been avoided with a

simple vaccination.

Logistical barriers can also stifle the spread and acceptance of new vaccines. Basic impediments like out-of-pocket cost, transportation to a clinic and wait times for the vaccine can contribute to overall low vaccination rates.

The biggest factor affecting male HPV [vaccination rates](#) is the lack of a well-established connection linking HPV in men to a life-threatening illness. The correlation between HPV and [cervical cancer](#) in women is responsible for popularizing the vaccine among young women. Unfortunately, a similar connection that would motivate males to get the vaccine has not yet been established. That needs to change, says Newman.

"The idea of an HPV vaccine for boys is new in Canada and so far it has had a low adoption rate," says Newman. "So we need physicians, social workers and public health care institutions to be more active conveying the benefits of the vaccine for boys and the positive role it can help play keeping Canadians safe and healthy."

More information: *Sex Transm Infect*
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