

Human Papillomavirus & Dentist Champions

In California, there is a disproportion in vaccination rates among the state's counties. Oropharyngeal cancer is now the most common cancer attributed to HPV in the United States, surpassing rates of cervical cancer recorded in 2019. Dentists can support and promote HPV vaccination by educating their patients.

Tips for Talking About HPV

- HPV is linked with 70% of oropharynx cancers. Certain strains of HPV cause 70% of oropharyngeal cancers in the U.S., affecting about 13,500 people each year.
- The HPV vaccine is cancer prevention. Children should get the HPV vaccine series at age 11 or 12 but can receive the vaccine as early as age 9. To achieve the best immune response, the HPV vaccine is most effective when given before age 13 and provides long-lasting protection.
- Capitalize on patient visits. Adolescent patients tend to see the dentist twice yearly, which may be more often than they see their primary care provider. This is a window of opportunity for dental professionals to provide counseling to parents and caregivers about the HPV vaccine and HPV's link to oral cancer.

Use Concise Messages

You have the power to protect your child against several types of cancer. We now have a vaccine to help prevent oral cancer!

As a parent or caregiver, you can safeguard your children against oral cancer through the HPV vaccine.

Dentists & HPV Conversations



How to start the conversation

“Did you know your pediatrician recommends a vaccine that can prevent HPV, and that HPV can cause cancer? Your child is the right age to be vaccinated. It’s time to ask your pediatrician about it.”

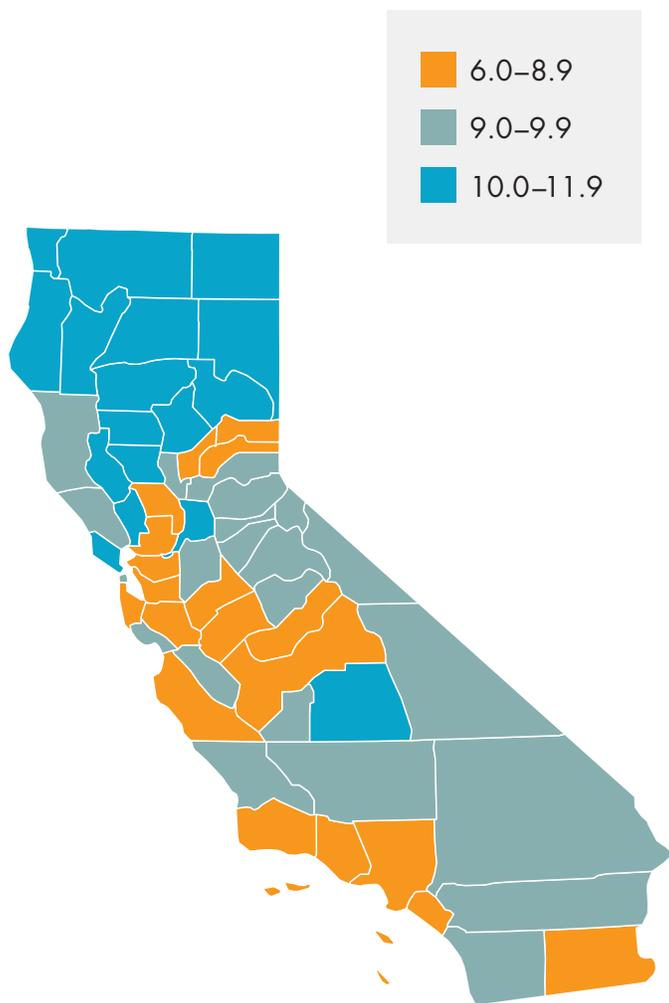
Parent or caregiver may ask...	...Dentists can say*
What is HPV?	HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the U.S. It can cause genital warts and many types of cancer, including oropharyngeal and cervical.
How common is HPV and HPV-related cancer?	Nearly everyone will have HPV in their lifetime, usually with no symptoms or treatment needed. But HPV does cause 31,000 cancer cases each year in the U.S., of which about 11,000 are oropharyngeal cancers.
Why is it important now?	If administered before age 15, the immune response is so strong that boys and girls only need a two-shot series. After age 15, they need three shots to get the same response and protection.
Is the vaccine safe and effective?	The vaccine protects against the types of HPV that cause oral cancers. Over 170 million doses of the HPV vaccine have been administered and no serious safety concerns have been identified.
How much does the vaccine cost?	All children ages 11–12 should be vaccinated. In California, it is universally covered for children regardless of insurance.

*Examples from the American Cancer Society

HPV-Attributable Cancer Rates

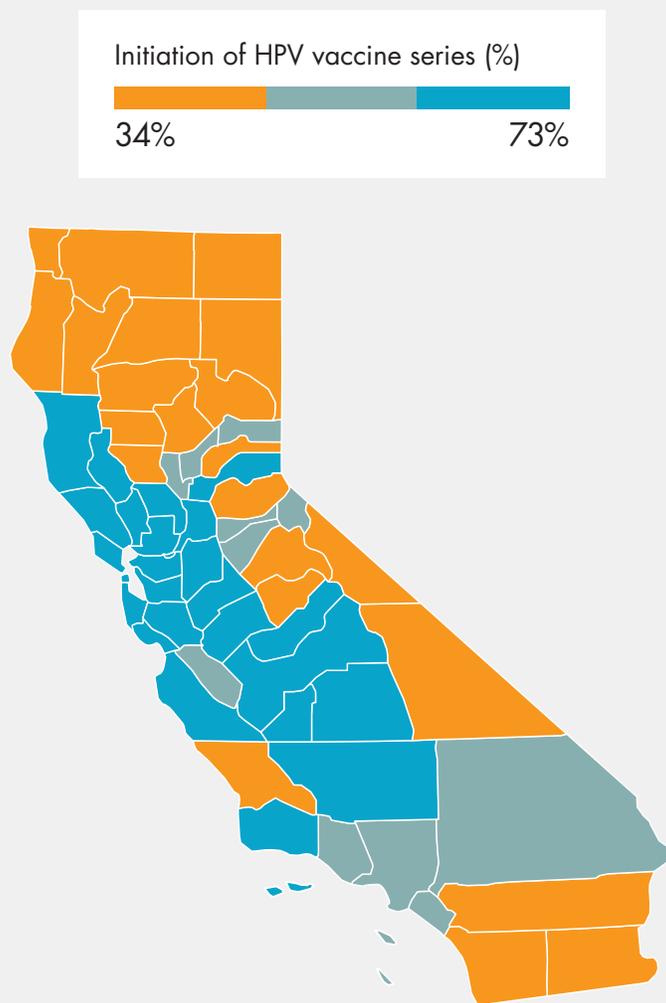
HPV Vaccination Rates by California County

California County-level Age-adjusted Rates of HPV-attributable Cancers per 100,000 people (2012–2016)



Warren BR, Gillette-Walch H, Adler J, Arias R, Klausner JD, Ashing KT, Villa A. Assessment of human papillomavirus vaccination rates of adolescents in California, 2018-2019. *Prev Med Rep.* 2023 Feb 13; 32:102144. doi: 10.1016/j.pmedr.2023.102144. PMID: 36852308; PMCID: PMC9958035.

Human Papillomavirus vaccine series initiation proportion by county, California, 2019, California Immunization Registry.



Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation - Harvard Law School, UC Davis Health Comprehensive Cancer Center. *HPV Vaccine Policy Landscape: Public Health Strategies*; 2022. Accessed September 16, 2023.



California counties with **lower HPV vaccination** rates have **higher HPV attributable cancer** rates.

