

□ HPV, a cancer that is killing our youth and young adults

Written by Dr. Rochelle Avent-Hassan, Dental Director NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center
Thursday, 18 April 2013 10:42



April is Oral Cancer Awareness month.

In 2013, 42,000 people in the United States will be diagnosed with oral cancer. This particular type of cancer has historically been caused by alcohol and tobacco use. But today, a new version of oral cancer is on the rise called Human Papilloma Virus or HPV-16.

HPV-16 is the same cancer that causes cervical cancer in women. This type of cancer is not to be confused with the other 120 different types of HPV, also known as warts. Warts are a harmless, non-cancerous version of the virus that can be found on the skin of hands, arms, and legs.

HPV-16 is not to be confused with bacteria that can be successfully treated with antibiotics such as penicillin. It is a virus that is very difficult to see and is transmitted by traditional and oral sex, as well as French kissing an infected person. This virus is the most dangerous version of the virus because it causes head and neck cancer. The lesions can be found on the tongue, inside the cheek, the floor of the mouth and the back of the throat. If left untreated it can spread rapidly throughout the entire body and cause death.

This deadly cancer is on the rise in younger individuals possibly due to misconceptions as to what constitutes being a virgin. In 2006 a vaccine was approved by the Food and Drug Administration to protect girls from cervical cancer. Recently, it has been recommended for both boys and girls.

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People of color are more often than whites affected and most likely to die from this cancer due to underutilization of preventive health services and lack of information.

April is oral cancer awareness month. And as such, NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center's Dental Clinic is providing free oral cancer screenings to homeless individuals. NorthPoint is encouraging all to get screened. The free screening event takes place April 22 – April 24. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 612-543-2500.