

MHN recommends all men/boys and women/girls be vaccinated for HPV

Written by

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(Washington, DC) – Michael Douglas' media-grabbing comments blaming his throat cancer on Human Papillomavirus (HPV) contracted during oral sex brought some much-needed attention to the epidemic of HPV infection in the United States. Men's Health Network (MHN) hopes that Douglas' statements will also get parents, healthcare practitioners, and legislators to recommend that boys and young men get the HPV vaccine. Although the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) approved the HPV vaccine for males, the vast majority of them have not been vaccinated—and that leaves them and those they love unprotected against HPV-related conditions and cancers.

"Half of the oral cancers in the United States are diagnosed in men and boys and 75 percent of them were caused by HPV," says Armin Brott, author of "The Military Father," and host of the nationally syndicated "Positive Parenting" radio show. "Overall, oral cancers are twice as common in men as women, but HPV-related cancer are six to seven times more common in men than women." Brott adds that HPV is now believed to cause more throat and oral cancers than tobacco. "But that's just the beginning of the devastation caused by HPV. Researchers are now investigating possible links between HPV infection and increased heart disease and stroke risk."

According to CDC, HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. There are more than 40 HPV types, some of which cause cancers and others which cause genital warts. Each year, there are an estimated 26,000 HPV-attributable cancers in the United States. About 17,000 occur in women, most of which are cervical cancers, and about 9,000 occur in men, most of which are oropharyngeal cancers.

"HPV is a virus not that easy to stop its transmission," said Jean Bonhomme, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor, Morehouse School of Medicine, member of the MHN Board, and National Black Men's Health Network founder. "Unlike other sexually transmittable viruses, which require mucus membrane contact, HPV can be transmitted by skin-to-skin contact, and it makes it harder to stop."

"It's important to vaccinate boys as well as girls for the HPV virus; it is inefficient to vaccinate only one partner against a condition that is spread the way HPV is," said Salvatore J. Giorgianni, Jr., PharmD, Chair, Men's Health Caucus Constituency of the American Public Health Association and Science Advisor, Men's Health Network. "Many young people do not consider oral-genital and other extra-vaginal activity as sexual activity. Sexually active persons of all ages should understand that these activities carry many of the risks associated with sexual intercourse, such as the transmission of HPV and should engage in safe practices, including as indicted, vaccination."

According to CDC estimation eight billion dollars are spent each year on direct medical costs for preventing and treating HPV-associated diseases. Currently available HPV vaccines prevent infection from the HPV types that cause about 70 percent of cervical cancers and the majority of other HPV-attributable cancers. HPV vaccine has been recommended for routine vaccination of 11-12 year-old girls since 2006 and for 11-12 year-old boys since 2011.

"Assuming that all girls and women will be vaccinated before their first sexual experience with a

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partner is simply unrealistic," said Ana Fadich, MHN Vice President. "The HPV quadravalent vaccine is as effective in boys and men, as it is in girls and women; vaccinating both males and females is an important way to help prevent HPV transmission."

Men's Health Network (MHN) is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to reach men, boys, and their families where they live, work, play, and pray with health prevention messages and tools, screening programs, educational materials, advocacy opportunities, and patient navigation. Learn more about MHN at www.menshealthnetwork.org and follow them on Twitter @MensHlthNetwork and [facebook.com/menshealthnetwork](https://www.facebook.com/menshealthnetwork)