



Canadian
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Media backgrounder #1: HPV-associated cancers

19 October 2016

TORONTO -

Canadian Cancer Statistics 2016 was released today by the Canadian Cancer Society, in collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada and Statistics Canada. The report includes a special topic chapter on HPV-associated cancers in Canada.

Overview

The report shows the incidence rate of HPV mouth and throat cancers increased 56% in males and 17% in females over 20 years (1992-2012). Canadian men are more than 4 times more likely to get an HPV mouth or throat cancer than women. This may be because men are more likely to acquire an oral HPV infection and take longer to clear these infections than women. If recent trends continue, it is likely that the rate of HPV mouth and throat cancers in men will surpass the rate of cervical cancer in women in the near future.

Almost 4,400 Canadians will be diagnosed with HPV cancers in 2016. It is estimated that about one-third of these are mouth and throat cancers. Another third are cervical cancers.

Highlights

HPV is associated with many types of cancer in both sexes

- In 2012, 3,760 Canadians were diagnosed with an HPV cancer. This number is expected to grow to almost 4,400 in 2016. Almost 1,200 will die from an HPV cancer this year.
- 35% of HPV cancers occurred in the cervix, while the remaining 65% of HPV cancers were in other areas.
- The number of new HPV mouth and throat cancers cases was about the same as cervical cancer cases.
- 1 in 3 HPV cancers was diagnosed in males

The HPV vaccine plays a vital role in cancer prevention, a core priority of the Canadian Cancer Society



- 2 types of high-risk HPV (types 16 and 18) are responsible for 70% of cervical cancer cases, as well as a large proportion of cancers of HPV-associated cancers of the vagina, vulva, anus, penis and mouth and throat. HPV vaccines prevent these 2 high-risk HPV infections.
- Although the vaccines aren't currently approved for the prevention of mouth and throat cancers, HPV16 is present in approximately 90% of HPV-associated mouth and throat cancers, and there is recent clinical trial evidence that HPV vaccination prevents the vast majority of these infections.
- All 3 vaccines available in Canada are highly effective against the HPV types they target. They are most effective when administered before the onset of sexual activity when the probability of prior infection is low, which is why publicly funded programs are for young age groups.
- Extensive research shows that the vaccines are safe and well tolerated. The most common side effects are soreness, swelling and redness at the injection site, as well as light-headedness, dizziness, nausea, headache, or fever.
- Studies have shown that HPV vaccination programs have already led to reductions in pre-cancerous cervical lesions in Canadian women.

The Canadian Cancer Society urges HPV vaccination for both males and females to help protect them against cancer.

- Girls and boys aged 9 and older can be vaccinated against HPV to reduce their risk of HPV-associated cancers.
- We urge parents to have their daughters and sons vaccinated through free school-based vaccination programs, where available.
- The Society is calling for HPV vaccination programs to be expanded to boys in those provinces and territories that do not yet have a school-based program for boys (BC, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the 3 territories).

The Society will continue to play a key role in reducing the burden of HPV-associated cancers by:

- Funding more excellent research across Canada to find more answers about HPV-associated cancers, especially mouth and throat cancers. Over the last 15 years, we've invested \$4 million into world-class research on HPV cancers.



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- In the 1990s, Society-funded research Dr. Eduardo Franco (McGill University) played a key role in establishing the link between HPV and cancer.
- Advocating on behalf of Canadians to call for HPV vaccination programs to be expanded to boys in those provinces that do not yet have a school-based program for boys.
- Raising awareness of vaccination programs amongst parents and providing information for those who wish to have their children vaccinated.
- Encouraging those who are not eligible to receive publicly funded HPV vaccination to speak with their healthcare provider about whether the HPV vaccine is right for them.

More about HPV

In 2012, 3,760 Canadians were diagnosed with an HPV-associated cancer, and this number is expected to rise to 4,375 in 2016. More than 40 types of HPV can infect the anogenital tract, including the skin of the penis, vulva and anus, and the lining of the vagina, cervix and rectum. These types can also infect the lining of the mouth and throat, notably the oropharynx (including the base of the tongue and tonsils).

In 2006, the first preventative HPV vaccine became available in Canada. Since then, there has been increased attention on HPV cancers and their prevention. However with the exception of cervical cancer, there was little data on HPV cancers in Canada. Measures of the population burden of HPV cancers are important for a number of reasons, including prevention planning and evaluation.

About Canadian Cancer Statistics

Canadian Cancer Statistics is an annual publication that provides estimates of the burden of cancer in Canada for the current year. This year marks the 30th edition of Canadian Cancer Statistics. It was prepared through a partnership of the Canadian Cancer Society, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Statistics Canada and provincial and territorial cancer registries.

About the Canadian Cancer Society

The Canadian Cancer Society is a national community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living with cancer. When you want to know more about cancer, visit our website cancer.ca or call our toll-free, bilingual Cancer Information Service at 1 888 939-3333.