

Study: Males should be given HPV vaccine

A U.S. study suggested that, in addition to girls and young women, men and boys should be given the human papillomavirus vaccine.

That finding comes from a Brown University study that determined alcohol and tobacco use do not increase the risk of head and neck cancers for people with the human papillomavirus type 16.

HPV16 is a common strain of the sexually transmitted HPV virus, another known risk factor for head and neck cancer. Researchers said their finding is the strongest evidence to date that such cancers have two distinct causes and might represent two distinct classes of cancer.

Study leader Dr. Karl Kelsey said the research has public health policy implications, since the HPV vaccine is restricted to females to prevent cervical cancer. However, up to 75 percent of sexually active U.S. men and women are infected with HPV at some point in their lives.

"Our current HPV vaccine recommendations should change," Kelsey said. "Head and neck cancers, regardless of their cause, are predominantly male diseases. If boys and men received the HPV vaccine, a lot of these cancers could be prevented."

The study was reported in The Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

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