

Increases in HPV vaccination in gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men throughout one year in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver

WHY DID WE RESEARCH THIS TOPIC?

- The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is recommended for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBM) in Canada regardless of age.
- We wanted to find out how many guys got vaccinated soon after vaccination programs for GBM began, and what made them more or less likely to get vaccinated.



HPV vaccine: A 3-dose vaccine that prevents cancers of the anus, cervix, head and neck as well as warts on the anus or genitals.

HOW DID WE RESEARCH THIS?

- From 2018 to 2021, we asked 1,602 GBM from Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver to answer questions about their sexual health, healthcare use, knowledge of the HPV vaccine, willingness to get vaccinated, and whether they had received the vaccine.
- We used the results to find out how guys' HPV vaccination status changed over one year.
- Many of our findings were different between guys under 27 and guys 27+.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

- Within one year of entering the study, about 6 in 20 previously-unvaccinated guys under 27 and about 1 in 20 previously-unvaccinated guys 27+ received their first HPV vaccine dose.
- Roughly 7 in 20 guys under 27 had gotten all 3 vaccine doses by the end of the study.
- More guys who said they were likely to get vaccinated ultimately got a first dose over the next year compared to guys who said they were undecided or unlikely to get vaccinated. However, the numbers of guys in each group were too similar for us to be confident that men willing to be vaccinated were truly more likely to get a first dose.
- Men living with HIV (who have a higher risk of HPV-related cancers) were not more likely to get vaccinated than HIV-negative men.
- Guys under 27 were more likely to get vaccinated if they had been to college/university or if they had tried to get on PrEP.
- Guys 27+ were more likely to get vaccinated if they were younger, lived in Vancouver, recently had anal or genital warts, had private or extended health insurance, or had been vaccinated against other infections.



Vaccine Coverage: In BC, Ontario and Quebec, the HPV vaccine has been free for GBM under 27 since 2016. For men 27 and older, it costs about \$200 per dose (over \$600 total) but is covered by some private health insurance plans.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE FINDINGS?

- A smaller share of GBM under 27 have all 3 HPV vaccine doses compared to boys given the vaccine in school. This means GBM are vaccinated far less than the national target (90%), and many are still at risk for HPV.

- The cost of the HPV vaccine may be stopping GBM 27+ without medical insurance from getting vaccinated. Healthcare providers may be hesitant to recommend the vaccine to guys 27+ as a result. Programs to make the vaccine less expensive for men 27+ may help healthcare providers encourage more guys to get vaccinated.
- Enhanced efforts toward vaccinating younger GBM and GBM living with HIV should be a special focus for healthcare providers.
- Promoting the vaccine to patients in a compassionate and queer-affirming way may help healthcare providers motivate vaccination for guys who are interested in or unsure about being vaccinated.

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