

HPV vaccine uptake among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver from 2017 to 2019

WHY DID WE RESEARCH THIS TOPIC?

- GBM are less likely to develop cancers and warts linked to the human papillomavirus (HPV) if they get vaccinated. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends that GBM of all ages get the HPV vaccine.
- We wanted to learn what proportion of GBM had received the HPV vaccine soon after free vaccination programs were introduced for GBM under 27. We also wanted to find out what factors made it easier or harder for GBM to access the vaccine, and whether there were added challenges for men 27+.



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 2017 to 2019, we asked 2,449 cis and trans GBM from Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver to answer a survey on their knowledge of the HPV vaccine, whether they had received the vaccine, and how they access health services.
- Many of our findings were different between guys under 27 and guys 27+.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

- A larger share of guys 27+ were unaware of the HPV vaccine than guys under 27. For guys who knew about the vaccine, as many as 2 in 5 didn't know it was recommended for men.
- Across the three cities, 26-35% of guys under 27 had gotten at least one dose of vaccine, but only 7-26% of guys 27+ had gotten one or more doses.
- 82-90% of unvaccinated guys' healthcare providers had not talked to them about HPV vaccination.
- Only 7-21% of guys 27+ living with HIV had gotten the vaccine.
- The most common place to be vaccinated was a sexual health clinic. Guys who visited one in the past 6 months were at least 2 times more likely to be vaccinated.
- Guys 27+ were less likely to be vaccinated, but those who had private health insurance or were accessing PrEP were more likely to be vaccinated.
- Guys who had already been vaccinated for hepatitis A or B were 2 (or more) times as likely to be vaccinated.



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?

- By 2019, as many as 3 in 4 GBM eligible for free vaccination in three major Canadian cities had not gotten the HPV vaccine.
- Even more guys who were ineligible for free vaccination had not gotten the HPV vaccine. Although vaccination is recommended for all GBM, the vaccine's high cost may be making it harder for guys 27+ to access.
- Guys living with HIV have a higher risk of cancers caused by the HPV virus. Healthcare practitioners and policymakers should take extra care to make sure guys living with HIV are provided the HPV vaccine.
- Starting a discussion with GBM patients about the HPV vaccine can help healthcare providers encourage more guys to get vaccinated.
- Bundling vaccination with sexual health services has helped GBM access the HPV vaccine outside of Canada. Offering HPV vaccination while administering other vaccines can help healthcare providers better protect guys from HPV-related cancers.

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