

# Preventing HPV and Cancer in First Nations Communities Across BC

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted school-based HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccination programs. Across BC, only 27.5% of all Grade 6 girls and boys completed the HPV two-dose series by June 30, 2020 – a decline from 67% in previous years.<sup>1</sup>



## HPV AND COMMUNITY WELLNESS: IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES

- **HPV is a common virus.** People can have HPV without knowing it. It can cause six types of cancer, including cancer of the throat, cervix, penis, anus, vulva and vagina.
- **HPV is the primary cause of cervical cancer.** First Nations people are 2–20 times more likely to be diagnosed with cervical cancer than non-Indigenous. First Nations people also have higher rates of cancers diagnosed in later stages and an increased risk of death.<sup>2</sup> Cervical cancer caused by HPV is the fifth most diagnosed cancer among First Nations people (2008-2017 data).
- By 2030, mouth and throat cancers caused by oral HPV infection are expected to make up nearly **half of all head and neck cancers** in Canada.<sup>3</sup> Men are more than 2.5 times as likely as women to be diagnosed with these cancers (2024 data).<sup>4</sup>
- People with HPV are **40% more likely to develop cardiovascular disease.** They also have double the risk of developing coronary artery disease compared with those who are not infected with HPV.<sup>5</sup>
- **There is a gap in access to culturally safe care and health information** for First Nations youth and families on how to protect against HPV and related cancers.

## WHAT CAN COMMUNITY LEADERS DO?

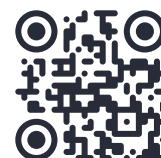
- 1 Support community health nurses (CHNs) and other care providers in HPV immunization efforts to help prevent HPV and the cancers it can cause (e.g. community health fairs, after-school immunization clinics).
- 2 Ensure all immunizations are uploaded in Panorama – the provincial immunization repository – this supports CHNs to address immunization needs, manage outbreaks and access community coverage reports more effectively.
- 3 Share information about HPV and cancer within your community. You can start by sharing First Nations Health Authority's (FNHAs) HPV resources at [fnha.ca/hpv](https://fnha.ca/hpv). This page includes information on HPV, downloadable resources, an HPV art contest and more.
- 4 Support wholistic wellness initiatives for HPV and cancer prevention. This includes promoting sexual health, regular dental visits and PAPs/cervical self-screening.
- 5 Speak to your CHN and learn about your community's HPV immunization coverage.



First Nations Health Authority  
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For more information

**[FNHA.CA/HPV](https://fnha.ca/hpv)**



## HELP PREVENT CANCERS CAUSED BY HPV

- **The HPV vaccine is a safe and highly effective way to prevent cancers caused by HPV**, especially for youth. It's free for BC youth of all genders ages 9 – 18. The vaccine is available to youth in schools starting in Grade 6 across BC.
- **Wholistic prevention for HPV and cancer** includes vaccines, health checks such as cervical cancer screening and self-swabs, regular dental visits, and wellness practices that support physical, sexual, mental and spiritual well-being.

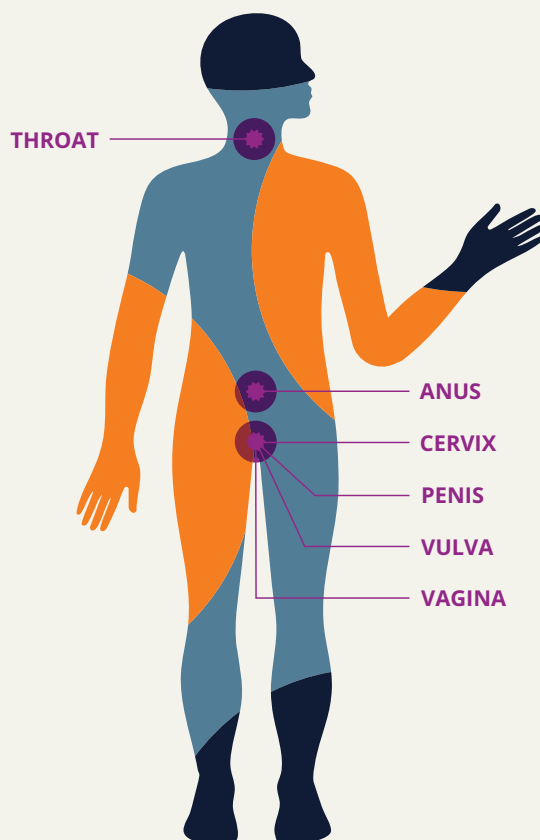
## FNHA TEAMS CAN SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

- Request HPV resources designed for First Nations youth, parents and caregivers
- Immunization support for CHNs
- Community event materials
- Consultations



LEARN MORE AT  
**FNHA.CA/HPV**

## TYPES OF CANCER CAUSED BY HPV



CONTACT  
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### References

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2. Dick, A., Holyk, T., Taylor, D., Wenninger, C., Sandford, J., Smith, L., Ogilvie, G., Thomlinson, A., & Mitchell Foster, S. (2021). Highlighting strengths and resources that increase ownership of cervical cancer screening for indigenous communities in Northern British Columbia: Community-driven approaches. International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics, 155(2), 211–219. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijgo.13915>
3. Tran, E. (2017, November 18). HPV-RELATED CANCERS: ENCOURAGING EARLY DIAGNOSIS. BC Cancer Agency. <http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/family-oncology-network-site/Documents/TRAN,%20E.%20HPV%20Cancers.pdf>
4. Canadian Cancer Society. (2024). Distribution of Cancer Cases for Selected Cancers by Sex. <https://cancerstats.ca/Incidence/Sex>
5. Joi, P. (2025, April 4). HPV increases risk of heart disease, finds study of 250,000 patients. Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. <https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/hpv-increases-risk-heart-disease-finds-study-250000-patients>



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