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Almost Half of American Men Have HPV

Yet just 10.7 of males received the vaccination.

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- [Public Health](#)
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Human papillomavirus — or HPV — affects about half of American men, according to a troubling [report](#) put out by *JAMA Oncology* using data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). It found that of 1868 men surveyed between 2013 and 2014, 45.2 percent tested positive for the genital HPV infection.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease in America. Prevalence of HPV among men was not shown to be affected by age — the survey covered men between the ages of 18 and 59 and found the infection widespread among all ages. [About half](#) of all Americans will contract HPV at some point in their lives, with 14 million new people testing positive for it each year.

What makes this preventable disease dangerous is the fact that [American boys are overwhelmingly undervaccinated](#) for the infection. That's because either their parents don't know about the virus or simply don't believe their teenage boys are sexually active – remember, the survey only tested men over 18, but vaccines are administered at around 11 or 12 for both boys and girls. Yet most strains of the virus can be prevented with a simple three-shot series of vaccinations.

These new findings are a jarring and compelling argument for why parents and medical practitioners should begin to consider it their responsibility that boys are inoculated. Part of the reason men are vaccinated at such low rates is because their doctors simply never make them aware of the option. HPV is, by and large, an invisible infection; the majority of strains, of which there are more than 150, will not give rise to any symptoms and eventually work their way out of your system on their own. But dozens can also cause cancer – particularly cervical cancer, meaning the failure of men to get vaccinated is a quantifiable and direct threat to women's health.

“Parents and medical practitioners should be advocating for their children to receive the Gardasil vaccine,” [Dr. Janet Prystowski](#), a dermatologist who treats patients with HPV warts, wrote to *Inverse*. “It is the responsible thing to do for the children. In an indirect way, this is a cancer vaccine.”

Prystowski thinks middle- and high-schoolers should be required to receive the vaccine. The idea is a point of contention among some; an ad campaign from Merck last summer, which featured heavily during the Olympics, was [criticized for “shaming” parents](#) into vaccinating their children for HPV, but there's an increasing amount of evidence that the nation's ignorance about the virus and its prevention – particularly among men – is a public health crisis, and that [vaccinations](#) for HPV should be mandatory.

Photos via Getty Images / Joe Raedle

Kastalia grew up in Littleton, Colorado, and has a journalism degree from the University of Southern California. She spent the past year and a half backpacking around the world and recently moved to New York. Her RTs = unwavering personal convictions.

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