OPC is also known as squamous cell carcinoma of the pharynx, including the base of the tongue and tonsils. The incidence of OPC has overtaken that of cervical cancer. Be sure to screen your patients for oral cavity and oropharyngeal cancers.

OPC incidence is rapidly increasing. This cancer is hard to detect before it spreads. Everyone is at risk for OPC, but middle-aged white men are at higher risk. Unlike oral cavity cancers, smoking and drinking are not common risk factors for OPC.

8 out of 10 people will contract the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) at some point in their lives and some will develop cancer. Everyone is at risk. Although OPC is highly treatable, the treatment and the side effects are severe.

HPV causes 70% of OPCs in the US. HPV type 16 (which is covered by HPV vaccine) causes 60% of all OPCs. HPV vaccine safely effectively prevents infection by the major cancer-causing HPV types.

You are the key to cancer prevention. Recommend the HPV vaccine to children ages 9 – 12. Every visit on or after the 9th birthday is an opportunity to recommend the vaccine.

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For More Information: aap.org/oralhealth • aap.org/immunization • email: immunize@aap.org

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