

HPV, Genital Warts, & Cancer

HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS [HPV] IS THE MOST COMMON SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE (STD). THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT MANY PEOPLE HEAL FROM IT WITHOUT NEEDING TREATMENT.

WHAT IS HPV?

HPV is a viral infection that can be passed on during unprotected vaginal, oral, and anal sex. It can also be passed from an infected mother to her child. People with HPV often show no symptoms, which is why many spread the infection without knowing it.

The good news is that most people who have HPV do not develop health problems from it. In the majority of cases, the body naturally clears HPV within 2 years. But sometimes the body does not clear HPV.

HPV can cause genital warts, warts in the throat (which is rare), and cervical cancer and other, less common but serious cancers, including cancers of the vagina, penis, anus, and throat.

Like the flu, there are many types of HPV.

Some cause genital warts

and others cause cancer.



1 in 2 people who are sexually

active will get an STD ...

by the age of 25.



GENITAL WARTS

Genital warts usually appear as a small flesh colored bump or group of bumps in the genital area. They can be large, small, raised or flat, or shaped like a cauliflower. Health care providers can usually figure out if someone has genital warts by looking at the warts. There is no cure for any kind of HPV, including the types that cause genital warts, but if the warts cause you discomfort they can be removed with medications that you can apply yourself or through treatments performed by your healthcare provider. If left untreated, genital warts might go away, remain unchanged, or increase in size or number.

CERVICAL AND OTHER CANCERS

Cervical cancer doesn't usually cause any symptoms unless it is quite advanced. Because of this, it's important for women to get a regular pap test (to check for abnormal cells). Some experts also recommend getting an anal pap test to check for signs of anal cancer for those who regularly have anal sex. Getting a pap test can find early signs of disease, so that problems can be treated early before they develop into cancer.



HPV continued...



FOR WEEKLY HEALTH TIPS

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Other HPV-related cancers might not show any symptoms until they are advanced and more challenging to treat. For signs and symptoms of these cancers, check out www.cancer.gov.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Get Educated

For vaginal and anal sex: Learn how to use latex condoms the right way, and use them every time. They're the only way to prevent STDs during vaginal and anal sex.

For oral sex: Use condoms for oral sex on a penis, and dental dams for oral sex on a vagina or anus.

For fingering, hand jobs, and other intimate touching: Wash your hands with soap and water after touching your partner's genitals before touching your own (and vice versa). To be extra safe, some people choose to use latex gloves. Find what works for you.

Get Vaccinated

Vaccines have been developed to protect both men and women from HPV infection. These can prevent a majority of problems caused by HPV, including genital warts and cancer. Ask your healthcare provider about the different HPV vaccines and whether they recommend one for you.

Get Tested

If you are a woman, get regular pap tests to screen for signs of cervical cancer. If you have regular anal sex, some experts also recommend getting an anal pap test. Both tests involve collecting a small amount of cells using a Q-tip swab. They should not hurt, but if you experience any discomfort talk to your healthcare provider.

Be Smart

Have sex with only one partner, who has been tested and is not infected, and who is only having sex with you.

Stay Clear

Avoid drinking alcohol and doing drugs before you have sex. It's difficult to make good decisions when under the influence.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- "Pulling out" before a man ejaculates into the vagina or anus
- Birth control (it only reduces risk for pregnancy)
- Washing your genitals, peeing, or douching after sex

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HPV

For additional information visit:

- www.itsyoursexlife.com/gyt/know
- www.plannedparenthood.org
- www.weRnative.org

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