



Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Fact Sheet

What is HPV?

HPV, also called human papillomavirus, is the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD). HPV is caused by a virus. There are more than 40 different types of HPV. Some types cause warts and some can cause cancer. Fortunately, there is a vaccine to protect people from HPV and genital warts and some types of cancer.

How does HPV spread?

HPV is usually spread during sex (oral, vaginal or anal sex). Rarely, HPV can be transmitted from a mom to her baby.

What are the symptoms of HPV?

Most people with HPV do not have any symptoms. About 90% of the time, HPV will go away on its own within 2 years. However, some people may develop genital warts (warts on the penis, vagina or in the anus). Some women may develop cervical cancer (cancer that develops in the opening to the womb), which can be deadly.

HPV can also cause other more rare diseases, such as recurrent respiratory papillomatosis (RRP), where warts grow in the throat. HPV can also cause cancer of the vagina, penis, anus, and the back of the throat. These kinds of cancer are rare.

How long does it take for symptoms to appear?

Most people infected with HPV never develop symptoms. In people who get genital warts, warts can appear in weeks or months after infection. Cancers can take years or even decades to occur. Women who develop cervical cancer usually do not have symptoms until the cancer is advanced. That's one reason why regular screenings are important for women. Other cancers don't usually produce symptoms until they are advanced and are harder to treat.

How is HPV diagnosed?

There is no HPV test that can help you know your "HPV status." There are tests for women over 30 years of age to look for cervical cancer, but these tests cannot be used on adolescents, men, or women under 30 years of age.

What is the treatment for HPV?

There is no treatment for HPV. But the symptoms of HPV can be treated. Warts sometimes go away on their own, but they can also stay the same or multiply. Warts can be removed by the person with the warts or by a healthcare provider. Talk to your healthcare provider for information on specific treatments for genital warts. Cervical cancers and other kinds of cancer caused by HPV are best treated early. Recurrent respiratory papillomatosis (RRP) can be treated with surgery and medicines. This can require many treatments over several years.

How can HPV be prevented?

Preventing HPV in the first place is the best way to avoid many diseases that HPV can cause. **The best way to prevent HPV is to get vaccinated.** The vaccine Cervarix can be given to girls/women to prevent most types of cervical cancer. Gardasil also prevents against cervical cancer and genital warts and can be given to girls/women and boys/men.

Condoms can help to prevent the spread of HPV (and prevent warts and cancer), but HPV can still spread to areas not covered by a condom.



Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Fact Sheet

Women should be screened regularly for cervical cancer and should follow-up on any abnormal results.

Get yourself tested for STDs if you are at risk. Anyone in Illinois who is 12 or older can get tested without their parents' consent.

Where can I find out more about HPV?

HPV facts:

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm>

HPV information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hpv/>

HPV vaccine:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hpv/vaccine.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/>