

Human papilloma virus or HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the United States. About 79 million Americans have HPV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says one in two sexually active people will have HPV at some point in their life.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

There are over 100 known types of HPV.

About 40 types can infect female and male genital areas.

Genital HPV is grouped into two types:

- ▶ Low-risk types can cause genital warts or may be harmless.
- ▶ High-risk types can raise the chances for cancer of the penis and anus.

How is it spread?

HPV is spread by skin-to-skin contact. Men get HPV from sexual contact with someone who has it. HPV can be spread by vaginal, anal, oral or hand-genital sexual contact. Some may have no signs of HPV but can still spread it to others. People can have more than one type of HPV. Long-term sex partners with HPV often have the same HPV types.

Risk of having HPV rise if you:

- ▶ Have been sexually active at an earlier age.
- ▶ Have multiple sex partners.
- ▶ Smoke.
- ▶ Have a weak immune system due to:
 - A medical condition (cancer or HIV).
 - Medicines.

Most sexually active men and women get genital HPV at some time in their lives.

What are signs of HPV in men?

If you have HPV, you may not be able to see or feel it. You can have HPV even if years since your last sexual contact with an infected person. You may never know which sex partner gave you HPV. HPV infection may cause:

- ▶ Genital warts (low-risk HPV).
 - See *Genital Warts* (page 17) for more information.
- ▶ Cancer (high-risk HPV).
 - Cancer of the penis (more common).
 - Cancers of the anus, throat, tongue or tonsils (less common).

How do you know if you have HPV?

Most men with HPV have no signs or signs go away on their own. Right now, there is no approved test for HPV in men. Testing before having signs is not recommended. Some providers may offer anal Papanicolaou or “PAP” tests to men who are at high risk for anal cancer (men with HIV or those who receive anal sex).

How is it treated?

Genital HPV infections are very common but:

- ▶ Most show no signs.
- ▶ Most go away with no treatment within a few years.

If HPV does not go away, treatments are not the same for low risk HPV and high-risk HPV:

- ▶ **Low-Risk HPV (Genital warts)** – Even when treated, virus may remain. Warts can also come back after treatment. Over-the-counter medicines for other types of warts should not be used. Treatments include:
 - Watch and wait to see if the warts stay the same, get bigger, or go away.
 - Medicines put on the warts.
 - Burning off the warts.
 - Freezing off the warts.
 - Cutting the warts out.
 - Using special lights or lasers to destroy the warts.

- ▶ **High-Risk HPV** – cancers from HPV are more treatable if found and treated promptly.

What can happen if you have HPV for a long time?

Some types of low-risk HPV can cause genital warts. If not treated, genital warts may:

- ▶ Go away.
- ▶ Remain unchanged.
- ▶ Increase in size or number.

See *Genital Warts* (page 17) for more information.

High-risk HPV can cause cancer. See your provider if you have strange growths, lumps or sores on your penis, scrotum, anus, mouth, or throat.

If you have HPV:

- ▶ Talk to your health care provider (HCP).
- ▶ Know that long time sex partners often share the same HPV types, even if both have no signs.



How can you avoid HPV?

- ▶ Get the vaccine for HPV.
 - One type of HPV vaccine can protect against the low-risk HPV that causes 90% of genital warts.
 - It is for all males 11 or 12 years old – up to 26 years of age for men with weak immune systems and men who have sex with men.
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends all 11-12 year old girls and boys get the HPV vaccine.
- ▶ Avoid sexual contact.
- ▶ Have safer sex:
 - Reduce the number of sexual partners.
 - Condoms, when used correctly, can reduce the risk of getting HPV. But, condoms may not cover all infected areas. Each time you have sex use a condom (male or female type):
 - During vaginal sex.
 - During anal sex.
 - During oral sex.
- ▶ Have sex with only one partner who does not have sex with others and does not have HPV.

Condoms may not fully protect against HPV since HPV can infect areas not covered by a condom.



For more information, see *Safer Sex* on page 71

Learn more:

Veterans Health Library:

HPV and Genital Warts: Understanding Your Diagnosis

http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/Encyclopedia/142,87539_VA

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

HPV and Genital Warts: Understanding Your Diagnosis

HPV and Men – Fact Sheet

Genital HPV Infection - Fact Sheet

www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm

HPV Vaccination

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/default.htm

National Cancer Institute (NCI/NIH):

Vaccine Reduces HPV Infections in Young Men

<http://www.cancer.gov/types/anal/research/quad-hpv-vaccine-men>