

# HPV (Human Papilloma Virus)

## What are the health effects of HPV?

HPV does not cause health problems for most people. Most people will fight off the HPV infection after about 2 years. There are many types of HPV. HPV infections are either low-risk or high-risk. You can get infected by many strains.

### Low-risk HPV infections:

- These can cause genital warts. The warts are usually painless and not a serious problem. They can be flat or raised, single or in groups, small or large. Without treatment, the warts may grow in size and in number, or they may go away on their own.
- Warts may be present on the vagina, vulva, cervix, penis, scrotum, or groin.

### High risk HPV infections:

- These can sometimes develop into cancer of the cervix (the opening in the womb). These infections may also lead to other cancers, such as oral, throat or anal cancer.

## Do I need to know if I have HPV?

- Most people will have HPV at some point in their lives. Often the infection goes away on its own over time. However, you can be re-infected with a different strain.
- However, it is very important for those with a cervix to get screened for cervical cancer that is caused by HPV. This is done through a pap smear.
- Anal Pap Smears can be used to screen for anal cancer.
- There is no test to detect HPV in the penis.

## How is HPV treated?

- Most of the time your body fights off the virus on its own.
- There are treatments for the health problems that HPV can cause, like genital warts, cervical changes, and cervical, oral, throat, and anal cancer.
- Even after genital warts are treated, the virus may remain in the body. This means that you may still pass HPV to your sex partners.

## What about a vaccine?

- The HPV vaccine is very effective. Anyone can get vaccinated to protect against the types of HPV that most commonly cause health problems. These vaccinations are given in 3 doses over 6 months.
- The vaccines are most effective when all doses are received before a person has sexual contact with their first partner.
- The vaccine is covered by most insurances up until the age of 26. However, it is approved for up until 45 years of age.

## Most people who have human papillomavirus (HPV) don't know it; often this STD has no symptoms.

- HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the United States. About 80% of sexually active people will have HPV at some time in their lives.
- HPV is passed through genital contact (such as vaginal and anal sex) or intimate skin-to-skin contact. You can pass HPV to others without knowing it.
- There is no cure for HPV, but there are treatments for the health problems that some types of HPV can cause, like genital warts and cervical cancer.