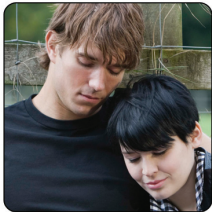
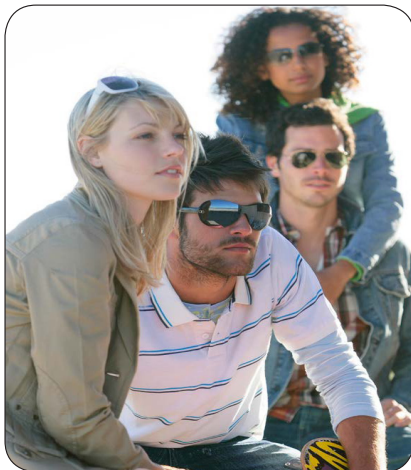


Genital HPV Infection – CDC Fact Sheet



Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. Some health effects caused by HPV can be prevented with vaccines.



What is HPV?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). HPV is a different virus than HIV and HSV (herpes). HPV is so common that nearly all sexually active men and women get it at some point in their lives. There are many different types of HPV. Some types can cause health problems including genital warts and cancers. But there are vaccines that can stop these health problems from happening.

How is HPV spread?

You can get HPV by having oral, vaginal, or anal sex with someone who has the virus. It is most commonly spread during vaginal or anal sex. HPV can be passed even when an infected person has no signs or symptoms.

Anyone who is sexually active can get HPV, even if you have had sex with only one person. You also can develop symptoms years after you have sex with someone who is infected making it hard to know when you first became infected.

Does HPV cause health problems?

In most cases, HPV goes away on its own and does not cause any health problems. But when HPV does not go away, it can cause health problems like genital warts and cancer.

Genital warts usually appear as a small bump or group of bumps in the genital area. They can be small or large, raised or flat, or shaped like a cauliflower. A healthcare provider can usually diagnose warts by looking at the genital area.

Does HPV cause cancer?

HPV can cause cervical and other cancers including cancer of the vulva, vagina, penis, or anus. It can also cause cancer in the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils (called oropharyngeal cancer).

Cancer often takes years, even decades, to develop after a person gets HPV. The types of HPV that can cause genital warts are not the same as the types of HPV that can cause cancers.

There is no way to know which people who have HPV will develop cancer or other health problems. People with weak immune systems may be less able to fight off HPV and more likely to develop health problems from it, this includes people with HIV/AIDS.

How can I avoid HPV and the health problems it can cause?

You can do several things to lower your chances of getting HPV.

Get vaccinated. HPV vaccines are safe and effective. They can protect males and females against diseases (including cancers) caused by HPV when given in the recommended age groups (see "Who should get vaccinated?" below).

HPV vaccines are given in three shots over six months; it is important to get all three doses.

Get screened for cervical cancer. Routine screening for women aged 21 to 65 years old can prevent cervical cancer.

If you are sexually active

- Use latex condoms the right way every time you have sex. This can lower your chances of getting HPV. But HPV can infect areas that are

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