



1 What is HPV?

HPV is “human papillomavirus. It’s a sexually transmitted virus and there are around 200 types of HPV. The subset of HPV types that infect the genital region can cause warts and deadly cancers such as cervical cancer and cancer of the penis, anus, vulva and throat.

2 How do I get HPV?

HPV only infects skin cells and is spread through skin-to-skin contact. The HPV types that infect the genital region and throat are spread through sexual contact.

3 How do I know I’ve got HPV?

Most of the time you don’t. But some people who have been exposed to HPV develop warts (bumps on the skin that sometimes look like little cauliflowers). These and other changes due to HPV can cause itching or burning. People with more advanced disease such as cancer may notice bleeding, pain and other symptoms.

4 How can I avoid getting HPV?

Avoiding HPV entirely can be difficult- more than 80% of sexually active people get at least one genital HPV infection at some point in their lives! But there are a few things you can do to reduce the risk: 1) Get vaccinated to prevent HPV infection if you are eligible for the vaccine or if your health care provider thinks you might benefit from it; 2) Condoms can reduce (but not eliminate) the risk of getting HPV; 3) reduce the number of sexual partners that you have.

5 How can I avoid giving my partner HPV?

It may not be possible to entirely avoid spreading HPV. But there are a few things you could do to reduce the risk: 1) Get vaccinated if you are eligible for the vaccine or if your health care provider thinks you might benefit from it; 2) Use condoms; 3) Get screened for cervical cancer if you are eligible. Apart from identifying pre-cancers, HPV screening is sometimes carried out at the same time. 4) See your health care provider if you are concerned that you have genital warts or other signs of HPV infection.

6 How do I get tested for HPV?

HPV testing of specimens taken from the cervix may be available for some women as part of being screened for cervical cancer. There is no HPV testing for men, and there are no blood tests for HPV.

7 If I have HPV should I tell my partner?

Most people who are sexually active get at least one genital HPV type at some point during their lives, so HPV is really common! The decision to tell your partner that you have HPV or a disease caused by HPV, now or in the past, is a personal one. The most important thing is to make sure that they are being vaccinated or screened for cervical cancer if they are eligible.

8 If I get HPV will I get cancer?

Only a small fraction of people who get HPV develop cancer, so having HPV does not mean that you will get cancer! However, it is important to reduce the risk by being vaccinated if you are eligible or if your health care provider thinks you might benefit from it, and getting screened for cervical cancer if you are eligible.

9 I've had the HPV vaccine- do I still need to be screened for HPV related cancers?

While the vaccine significantly reduces your risk of HPV related cancers, women who have had the HPV vaccine still need to have cervical screening- talk to your healthcare provider about the screening policies in your area.

10 If I have contact with someone with warts will I get HPV?

Warts do contain a large amount of HPV that can be spread, so there is a good chance that you could get it. That doesn't mean for sure that you will get warts yourself, but you should talk to your healthcare provider about screening or vaccination.

11 I'm a boy-should I be concerned about HPV?

Yes- boys and girls, men and women are all at risk for HPV- it's sexually transmitted! HPV can cause genital warts in boys as well as cancers of the anus, penis and throat. Boys can also spread HPV to their sexual partners, so avoiding getting it in the first place is a great idea. If you can, get vaccinated!

12 I'm over 26 years of age should I get vaccinated?

Some people over the age of 26 years may benefit from HPV vaccination- talk to your healthcare provider.

13 I've never had sex-should I get screened for HPV?

If you've never had sex, your risk of getting HPV is so low that it would probably not be worthwhile to get tested.

14 I was screened and don't have HPV-does that mean I'm not at risk of HPV related cancer?

It means that your risk of developing cancer in the near future is very low. However, you may still need to be screened in the future, depending on the screening policies in your area.

15 Are there any lifestyle changes I can take to reduce my risk of getting HPV?

Yes! You can reduce your risk of getting HPV by getting vaccinated if you are eligible, using condoms and reducing the number of sexual partners that you have. You can also reduce your risk of getting cancer if you've already been infected with HPV by getting screened if you are eligible, and by not smoking,

16 Do condoms prevent HPV?

Condoms partially reduce the risk of infection because they cover (protect) only partially the skin of the genital tract. The more consistent the use of condoms, the higher the amount of protection.

Condom use 100% of the time reduces the risk of spreading HPV by about 70%. Less frequent use means less protection.

17 Is the HPV vaccine safe for my child?

Yes. The HPV vaccines have been extensively and independently evaluated. All scientific evidence shows that the HPV vaccines are extremely safe. The World Health Organization (WHO) and virtually all countries in the world now recommend vaccination. With over 200 million doses distributed, no significant side effects have been identified other than the temporary reaction at the injection site.

18 How does HPV lead to cancer?

Once infected, the body may or may not clear HPV infection. If the body fails to clear the infection, long term persistence may result in pre-cancerous changes. If left untreated, some of these changes will evolve over time into cancer. Screening and treating pre-cancers greatly reduces the risk of developing cancer.

19 Should my daughter be screened?

Most countries have guidelines as to how to screen women for cervical cancer and these guidelines should be followed. Vaccinated girls may still need some form of screening to protect against the rarer HPV types than can cause cancer and are not addressed by the vaccine. However vaccinated girls have a much lower probability of developing pre-cancers and this could reduce the number of screenings and potential surgical treatments your daughter (and any young women you care about) might need.

20 If I have HPV while I'm pregnant will it affect my baby?

HPV is not easily spread from mother to infants. On rare occasions, babies born to mothers who have genital warts due to HPV types (HPV 6 and 11) at the time of delivery may pick up the virus while they are passing through the birth canal. The babies may later develop warts in the larynx that may require surgical treatment. Vaccinating women against HPV 6 and 11 dramatically reduces the risk of mothers passing the virus to their babies.

21 How do I reduce my risk of getting HPV related disease?

Take up screening opportunities and follow local guidelines around regularity of screening. If you have signs of pre-cancer, close follow up and or treatment should be offered. Adult vaccination of women is likely to be considered in the future. Currently, only a few countries have programs that routinely cover vaccination of women over age 26 years of age.

Men do not benefit from screening. For men, consistent use of condoms can help to reduce but not eliminate the risk of infection. Vaccination is the best way to prevent getting HPV for both girls and boys. Talk to your healthcare provider about your eligibility for HPV vaccination.

22 I am over the age of 26- should I still be vaccinated for HPV?

In the US, vaccination is licensed until age 26, the age limit that was used in the clinical trials of the vaccines. In Europe vaccination is approved from age 9 onwards, while there is no upper age limit access might depend on local healthcare policies and guidelines. Some studies have shown that vaccination of women up to ages 45 / 50 is very protective among women who have not been not infected by HPV before vaccination. Most countries have specific guidelines for vaccination of adult women.

23 I was screened and don't have HPV-does that mean I'm not at risk of HPV related cancer?

As long as you are sexually active, you are at risk of HPV infection, along with a small risk of cancer.

24 My partner has told me that s/he has HPV-does that mean I've got it too?

Not necessarily, but HPV infection usually affects both partners within a few months. HPV is largely invisible, but if there are signs of HPV, i.e., genital warts, you should talk to your doctor.

Because you, or your partner could have HPV without knowing, if you are a sexually active woman, it makes sense to take up cervical screening opportunities that are offered. In some cases, routine screening includes testing for HPV in your cervix. There is no specific treatment for HPV infection yet, but it is important to look for and treat any pre-cancerous cells found as part of the screening process.

There are no approved HPV testing or screening procedures for men.

25 How can I avoid giving my partner HPV?

If you know you have HPV because you have genital warts or because you have been tested for HPV, your only option is consistent use of condoms. While this doesn't provide total protection, it does reduce your risk. If you are eligible you and your partner should be vaccinated against HPV. There are more than 200 types of HPV and vaccination can protect you from the ones that you don't already have.

26 My partner has told me s/he has HPV. I don't have it-does that mean s/he's been unfaithful?

No- HPV can stay latent (dormant, or undetectable) for a long time. It is therefore very difficult to figure out with any certainty when they got HPV.

27 I think my partner may have given me HPV. Is that something he or she could have avoided?

Most of the time people don't know that they have HPV even if they have had it for some time. So most likely your partner had no idea that they were spreading the virus. Getting more people vaccinated will lower the risk of passing on the virus to people we care about. If you think you may have HPV, you should check with your healthcare provider to see if you or/and your partner is eligible for cervical cancer screening.

28 I'm on the contraceptive pill-does that increase my risk?

The long-term use of oral contraceptives has been found to slightly increase the risk of cervical cancer, but only among women with HPV infection. Most of the evidence for this comes from older studies, currently available pills have lower estrogen levels and the risk, if any, is unclear at this stage. Having HPV is the main risk factor for cervical cancer, and prevention still centers on vaccination to prevent HPV infection and screening for cervical pre-cancers. If in doubt consult your healthcare provider.

29 Can I get screened for anal, penile and oral cancers?

There are no available tests that can identify pre-cancerous lesions in the penis or mouth.

For people at increased risk for anal intraepithelial neoplasia (AIN, a potentially pre-cancerous condition) and anal cancer, some experts recommend screening with anal cytology testing/ HPV DNA test. This group includes men who have sex with men, women who have had cervical cancer or vulvar pre-cancer/cancer, and anyone who is HIV-positive. The anal Pap test has not been studied enough to know how often it should be done, or if it actually reduces the risk of anal cancer by catching AIN early.

30 I have HIV- can I get the HPV vaccine?

Yes. HIV-positive individuals will respond to the vaccine in a similar way those individuals who do not have HIV. Vaccination of HIV-positive and other immunosuppressed individuals is highly recommended up to the age of 26 years because their increased risk of cancers dues to HPV. Some HIV-positive individuals may benefit from vaccination after age 26, and you should talk with your healthcare provider.

This document was prepared as a general document for HPV Awareness day, you should speak to your personal physician for specifics relevant to your own diagnosis.

Additional information may be obtained here:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/>

National Cancer Institute: <https://www.cancer.gov/types/cervical/pap-hpv-testing-fact-sheet>

<https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/CRC/PDF/Public/8549.00.pdf>

-

GIVE LOVE



NOT HPV