

CAN HPV BE TREATED?

- There is no treatment for genital HPV itself. Most of the time, though, your body fights off the virus on its own.
- There are treatments for the health problems that genital HPV can cause, like genital warts, cervical changes, and cervical 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?

Everyone can get vaccinated to protect against the types of HPV that most commonly cause health problems.

The vaccine is most effective when all doses are received before a person has sexual contact with their first partner.

- The HPV vaccine protects people with vaginas against the types of HPV that cause most cervical cancers, and also protects against most genital warts.
- Providers recommend that all 11- and 12-year-old people with vaginas get vaccinated against HPV. HPV vaccination is also recommended up through age 26 if they did not get all vaccine doses when they were younger.
- Even after receiving all vaccine doses, it is important for people with vaginas to get Pap tests as recommended.
- The HPV vaccine protects people with penises against most genital warts. This vaccine is available to them from 11 through 21 years of age. The vaccine is also recommended for any man who has sex with men through age 26, and for people with compromised immune systems (including HIV) through age 26, if they did not get HPV vaccine when they were younger.

a message for everyone

PROTECT YOURSELF + YOUR PARTNERS

Most people who have sex will have HPV at some time in their lives. HPV usually goes away on its own without causing any health problems.

If you have a vagina, it's very important to have regular Pap tests to check for problems that could develop into cervical cancer. Most people with vaginas who get cervical cancer have not had regular Pap tests.

There is no blame, or shame about having genital HPV. The virus is very common.

If you have HPV, don't blame your current partner or assume your partner is cheating. People can have genital HPV for a very long time before it is detected. Talk openly and honestly with your partners about HPV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



For more information, contact:

MULTNOMAH COUNTY STI CLINIC

Phone: 503-988-3700

Address: 619 NW 6th Ave, 2nd Floor • Portland, OR 97209



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention



genital HPV

THE FACTS



THE FACTS

- Genital human papillomavirus (/pap pil LO ma VY rus/) (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted virus in the United States. Most sexually active people will have genital HPV at some time in their lives.
- Most people who have genital HPV don't know they have it. There are often no symptoms, and it goes away on its own—without causing any serious health problems.
- HPV is passed on through genital contact (such as vaginal and anal sex). 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.

HOW CAN I LOWER MY RISK FOR HPV?

- The surest way to prevent HPV is not to have sex.
- If you decide to be sexually active, limit the number of partners you have. The fewer sex partners you have, the less likely you will be to get HPV.
- Condoms may lower chances of getting HPV, genital warts, or cervical cancer if used the right way every time you have sex. However, HPV can infect areas that are not covered by a condom—so you should not expect condoms to fully protect against HPV.
- Washing the genitals, urinating, or douching after sex will not prevent any sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- People can get vaccinated to protect against the types of HPV that most commonly cause health problems. The vaccine is most effective when all doses are received before a person has sexual contact with their first partner.

HOW DO PEOPLE GET HPV?

Anyone who has ever had genital contact with another person can have genital HPV. Anyone can get it—and pass it on—without even realizing it.

DO I NEED TO KNOW IF I HAVE HPV?

There is no reason to be tested just to find out if you have genital HPV. Most people will have genital HPV at some time in their lives. Usually the infection goes away on its own. However, it is very important for people with vaginas to get screened for cervical cancer that is caused by genital HPV.

IF YOU HAVE A VAGINA

You should get regular Pap tests to check for changes in your cervix. The Pap test is the best way to screen for cervical cancer. Changes that are caught early can be treated before they lead to cancer.

If you are 30 or over, a provider may also give you an HPV test. This test can help the provider decide what other tests or treatment you should have.

IF YOU HAVE A PENIS

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved a test for HPV in people with penises. See your provider if you have genital warts.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF HPV?

Genital HPV does not cause health problems for most people. There are many types of HPV. All HPV infections are either low-risk or high-risk. Low-risk HPV infections can cause genital warts. The warts are usually painless and not a serious problem. They can be flat or raised, single or in groups, and small or large. Without treatment, genital warts may go away, stay the same, or grow in size or number.

People with vaginas and HPV might have warts on the vagina, vulva, or cervix. People with penises and HPV might have warts on the penis, scrotum, or groin. Everyone can have genital warts on the anus or thigh.

High-risk HPV infections can sometimes develop into cancer of the cervix (the opening of the womb). These infections may also lead to other cancers, such as anal cancer. In some people, high-risk HPV infections can persist and cause cell changes. If these cell changes are not treated, they may lead to cancer over time.

MORE IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT HPV

IF YOU HAVE A VAGINA

It's important to know about the link between HPV and cervical cancer and about the steps you can take to prevent this infection. Getting all doses of the HPV vaccine and getting regular screening can prevent cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine can also prevent most genital warts.

IF YOU HAVE A PENIS

It's important to know that you can have genital HPV—and pass it to your partners—even if you have no symptoms. Some types of HPV can lead to cancer of the anus and penis, but these cancers are rare in people with healthy immune systems. The HPV vaccine prevents the most common problem caused by HPV in people with penises, genital warts.

DOES HAVING HPV MEAN I'LL GET CANCER?

No. Most types of HPV infection don't lead to cancer. People with vaginas can protect themselves from cervical cancer by getting regular Pap tests and by getting treated early for any problems that could turn into cancer.