

HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV)

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. HPV also causes common skin warts. There are many different types of HPV.

CAUSE

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.

SYMPTOMS

Most people with HPV do not know they are infected and never develop symptoms or health problems from it. Some people find out they have HPV when they get genital warts. Women may find out they have HPV when they get an abnormal Pap test result (during cervical cancer screening). Others may only find out once they've developed more serious problems from HPV, such as cancers. Common skin warts can appear anywhere on the body, but are frequently found on fingers, hands, knees and elbows. Plantar warts are usually found on the sole of the foot.

SPREAD

You can get HPV by having vaginal, anal, or oral 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. Common skin warts are spread through close contact with an infected person.

INCUBATION (time from exposure to onset of symptoms)

Unknown; estimate is 3 months to several years.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

Sexually-transmitted warts: unknown

Common skin warts: unknown; probably as long as wart(s) is present

EXCLUSION

Child care and School: None.

DIAGNOSIS

Contact your physician, or a dermatologist for common skin wart diagnosis.

TREATMENT

There is no treatment for the virus itself. However, there are treatments for the health problems that HPV can cause:

1. Genital warts can be treated by you or your physician. If left untreated, genital warts may go away, stay the same, or grow in size or number.
2. Cervical precancer can be treated. Women who get routine Pap tests and follow up as needed can identify problems before cancer develops. Prevention is always better than treatment. For more information visit www.cancer.org

PREVENTION/CONTROL

Genital warts:

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 not covered by a condom - so condoms may not give full protection against getting HPV;
- Be in a mutually monogamous relationship - or have sex only with someone who only has sex with you.

Common skin warts:

Avoid direct contact with other peoples' exposed warts. Minimize time you spend barefoot outside of your home, and wear designated "shower shoes" into the shower if you reside in a dorm-like setting.

WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

All boys and girls ages 11 or 12 years should get vaccinated. Catch-up vaccines are recommended for males through age 21 and for females through age 26, if they did not get vaccinated when they were younger. The vaccine is also recommended for gay and bisexual men (or any man who has sex with a man) through age 26. It is also recommended for men and women with compromised immune systems (including people living with HIV/AIDS) through age 26, if they did not get fully vaccinated when they were younger.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/cd/> or <http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/>