Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

What You Need to Know

OAKLAND COUNTY MICHIGAN HEALTH DIVISION OakGov.com/Health

What is HPV?

HPV is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that is caused by Human Papillomavirus. It is a group of viruses that include different strains or types. HPV is NOT the same as HIV or genital herpes (HSV).

Who Can Get HPV?

Both men and women can be infected with one or more strains of the HPV virus.
At least 50% of sexually active people get an HPV infection at some point in their lives.

How Do You Get HPV?

The most common way to get HPV is through sexual contact with an infected person.
Since most HPV infections have no signs or symptoms, many people are unaware they are infected
and can spread the virus. Rarely, HPV is spread from a mother to a newborn baby during vaginal delivery.

What are the Symptoms of HPV?

Most people who get HPV have no symptoms. Some get visible genital warts or have changes to the
cervix, vulva, anus or penis.

How Long After Exposure Do Symptoms First Begin?

The incubation period of HPV can vary so it is very hard to determine when the person got infected.

How is HPV Diagnosed?

Most women are diagnosed when they have an abnormal Pap test. No HPV tests are available for men.

Are There Complications?

A small number of people may get an infection that doesn't clear up. HPV infection can cause cervical
and other cancers. A baby that is exposed to HPV very rarely develops warts in the throat or voice box.

Is There Treatment for HPV?

There is no "cure" for HPV infection but in most people the infection goes away on its own. There are treatments for the health problems that HPV causes such as genital warts, cervical changes and cervical cancer.

How can HPV be prevented?

Vaccines can protect males and females against the most common types of HPV. Vaccines are given in three shots and work best when given before a person's first sexual contact. Using condoms may also lower the risk of getting HPV. You can also lower your risk by limiting your number of sex partners or being in a faithful relationship with one partner.