

HPV (HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS)

What You Need to Know

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 HPV. HPV infection is extremely common throughout the world, and most sexually active adults will have an HPV infection at some point during their lives.

How do you get HPV?

HPV is spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact. You can get HPV by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus, even if they don't have signs or symptoms. 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 and do not know they have the infection. Women may find out they have HPV when they get an abnormal Pap test result, and some people find out they have HPV when they get more serious problems from HPV, such as genital warts or cancers. A baby that is exposed to HPV can develop warts in the throat or voice box.

How is HPV diagnosed?

There is no test to find out a person's HPV status, and there is no approved HPV test to find HPV in the mouth or throat. There are HPV tests that can screen for cervical cancer; however, healthcare providers only use these tests for screening women aged 30 years and older. HPV tests are not recommended to screen men, adolescents, or women under the age of 30 years.

Is there a treatment for HPV?

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

How can HPV be prevented?

Vaccination prevents HPV infection, benefitting both the vaccinated person and their future sex partners by preventing spread of HPV. HPV transmission can be reduced, but not eliminated, with the consistent and correct use of physical barriers such as condoms.

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