HPV and Men - Fact Sheet





Nearly all sexually active people will get human papillomavirus (HPV) at some time in their life. Although most HPV infections go away on their own without causing problems, HPV can cause men to develop genital warts, or some kinds of cancer. Getting vaccinated against HPV can help prevent these health problems.

What is HPV?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection. HPV is a viral infection that can be spread from one person to another person through anal, vaginal, or oral sex, or through other close skin-to-skin touching during sexual activity. If you are sexually active you can get HPV, and nearly all sexually active people get infected with HPV at some point in their lives. It is important to understand that getting HPV is not the same thing as getting HIV or HSV (herpes).

How do men get HPV?

You can get HPV by having sex with someone who is infected with HPV. This disease is spread easily during anal or vaginal sex, and it can also be spread through oral sex or other close skin-to-skin touching during sex. HPV can be spread even when an infected person has no visible signs or symptoms.

Will HPV cause health problems for me?

Most of the time HPV infections completely go away and don't cause any health problems. However, if an infection does not go away on its own, it is possible to develop HPV symptoms months or years after getting infected. This makes it hard to know exactly when you became infected. Lasting HPV infection can cause genital warts or certain kinds of cancer. It is not known why some people develop health problems from HPV and others do not.

What are the symptoms of HPV?

Most men who get HPV never develop symptoms and the infection usually goes away completely by itself. However, if HPV does not go away, it can cause genital warts or certain kinds of cancer.

See your healthcare provider if you have questions about anything new or unusual such as warts, or unusual growths, lumps, or sores on your penis, scrotum, anus, mouth, or throat.

What are the symptoms of genital warts?

Genital warts usually appear as a small bump or group of bumps in the genital area around the penis or the anus. These warts might be small or large, raised or flat, or shaped like a cauliflower. The warts may go away, or stay the same, or grow in size or number. Usually, a healthcare provider can diagnose genital warts simply by looking at them. Genital warts can come back, even after treatment. The types of HPV that cause warts do not cause cancer.

Can HPV cause cancer?

Yes. HPV infection isn't cancer but can cause changes in the body that lead to cancer. HPV infections usually go away by themselves but having an HPV infection can cause certain kinds of cancer to develop. These include cervical cancer in women, penile cancer in men, and anal cancer in both women and men. HPV can also cause cancer in the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils (called oropharyngeal cancer). All of these cancers are caused by HPV infections that did not go away. Cancer develops very slowly and may not be diagnosed until years, or even decades, after a person initially gets infected with HPV. Currently, there is no way to know who will have only a temporary HPV infection, and who will develop cancer after getting HPV.

How common are HPV-related cancers in men?

Although HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection, HPV-related cancers are not common in men.

Certain men are more likely to develop HPV-related cancers:

- Men with weak immune systems (including those with HIV) who get infected with HPV are more likely to develop HPV-related health problems.
- Men who receive anal sex are more likely to get anal HPV and develop anal cancer.

Can I get tested for HPV?

No, there is currently no approved test for HPV in men.

Routine testing (also called 'screening') to check for HPV or HPV-related disease before there are signs or symptom, is not recommended by the CDC for anal, penile, or throat cancers in men in the United States. However, some healthcare providers do offer anal Pap tests to men who may be at increased risk for anal cancer, including men with HIV or men who receive anal sex. If you have symptoms and are concerned about cancer, please see a healthcare provider.

Can I get treated for HPV or health problems caused by HPV?

There is no specific treatment for HPV, but there are treatments for health problems caused by HPV. Genital warts can be treated by your healthcare provider, or with prescription medication. HPV-related cancers are more treatable when diagnosed and treated promptly. For more information.

How can I lower my chance of getting HPV?

There are two steps you can take to lower your chances of getting HPV and HPV-related diseases:

- Get vaccinated. The HPV vaccine is safe and effective. It can protect men against warts and certain cancers caused by HPV. Ideally, you should get vaccinated before ever having sex (see below for the recommended age groups). CDC recommends 11 to 12 year olds get two doses of HPV vaccine to protect against cancers caused by HPV.
- Use condoms the correct way every time you have sex. This can lower your chances of getting all STIs, including HPV. However, HPV can infect areas that are not covered by a condom, so condoms may not give full protection against getting HPV.

Can I get the HPV vaccine?

In the United States, the HPV vaccine is recommended for the following men:

- All boys at age 11 or 12 years (or as young as 9 years)
- Older boys through age 21 years, if they did not get vaccinated when they were younger
- Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men through age 26 years, if they did not get vaccinated when they were younger
- Men with HIV or weakened immune systems through age 26 years, if they did not get vaccinated when they were younger

What does having HPV mean for me or my sex partner's health?

See a healthcare provider if you have questions about anything new or unusual (such as warts, growths, lumps, or sores) on your own or your partner's penis, scrotum, anus, mouth or throat. Even if you are healthy, you and your sex partner(s) may also want to get checked by a healthcare provider for other STIs.

If you or your partner have genital warts, you should avoid having sex until the warts are gone or removed. However, it is not known how long a person is able to spread HPV after warts are gone.

What does HPV mean for my relationship?

HPV infections are usually temporary. A person may have had HPV for many years before it causes health problems. If you or your partner are diagnosed with an HPV-related disease, there is no way to know how long you have had HPV, whether your partner gave you HPV, or whether you gave HPV to your partner. HPV is not necessarily a sign that one of you is having sex outside of your relationship. It is important that sex partners discuss their sexual health, and risk for all STIs, with each other.

Where can I get more information?

24hr Hotline +(852) 6511 8000

Monday to Friday
by appointment 10:00am - 06:00pm
Saturday to Sunday
By appointment 10:00am – 01:00pm

CENTRAL:
Room 704, Manning House, 38 Queen's Road Central, Central

TSIM SHA TSUI:
Suite 1408, 14/F, World Commerce Centre, 11 Canton Road, Tsim Sha Tsui