

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Fact Sheet

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the United States. It can infect the genital areas, rectum, mouth, and throat. There are more than 40 types of HPV. Some can cause genital warts and certain cancers such as cervical, mouth, and throat cancer.

How is HPV Spread?

HPV is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact during vaginal, anal, and oral sex with someone who has been infected. Most cases of HPV are spread by partners who do not have visible signs or symptoms. Many individuals with HPV do not even know they carry the virus.

Symptoms of HPV

Most types of HPV are not harmful to people, and a person can have HPV for months or even years unaware of it. While most types are harmless, there are some serious symptoms that can occur.

- Genital warts; can be a small bump or group of bumps in the genital area
- Bumps vary in sizes: small or large, raised or flattened, or even shaped like a cauliflower
- Some HPV cases can cause cervical cancer or other cancers

Treating HPV

For many cases HPV goes away on its own and does not cause any health problems. There is no treatment for HPV itself; however, there are treatments for the health issues it can cause:

- Genital warts can be treated with prescription topical medications (gels or creams), medically freezing, or cauterization (burning or freezing of the tissue)
- Pre-cancer is treated by taking out the cells that are not normal. Usually a short procedure in a healthcare provider's office or health center.
- If cancer stage is reached, then medical procedures will be attempted: surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy

Reducing the Risk

Even though most HPV cases are harmless to people, avoiding this STIs is ideal to reduce the risk of the different cancers it can cause. Having one STI increases your risk for getting other STIs.

- Using a latex condom to prevent the skin-to-skin contact
- Limit the number of sexual partners
- Having one partner and communicating with that partner about their STI status is important

To prevent the risk of any other health problems caused by HPV

- Women get tested for HPV and other STIs during Pap Test
- Men there are no known HPV test; however talk to a dentist about any signs of throat cancer (Oropharyngeal Cancer), this can be a sign for HPV

Prevention is through vaccination

- All boys and girls around the ages of 11 or 12 should be vaccinated
- Catch-up vaccinations are recommended for men under 21 and females under 26

Pregnancy and HPV

If you are pregnant and have HPV, you can get genital warts or develop abnormal cell changes on your cervix. Abnormal cell changes can be found with routine cervical cancer screening. You should get routine cervical cancer screening even when you are pregnant.

More Information: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm>



LENAWEE COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

1040 S. Winter St. Suite 2328
Adrian, MI 49221
Phone: (517) 264-5238
Fax: (517) 264-0790
www.lenawehealthdepartment.org