

# HPV - Human Papillomavirus

## By

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April is STD Awareness Month

## What is HPV?

HPV, or Human Papillomavirus, is one of the most common [sexually transmitted diseases](#) (STD's) and one of the least talked about. There are 70 different types of HPV and about 30 are transmitted sexually. It is possible to have numerous types of HPV at once and some people with the disease have multiple strains of HPV. Some types of HPV can cause genital warts, while other strains do not cause noticeable symptoms. Every case is different.

Many people with HPV do not realize that they have it and neither do their partners. There are few diagnostic tests for women to determine if they have the disease, but there are not tests to determine if men have the disease. If you are a male and any of your sexual partners have the disease, it is very likely that you have HPV and should go to your doctor. The only guaranteed prevention of this disease is abstinence and those who are sexually active should to see their doctor at least once a year.



## How Common is HPV?

"Approximately 20 million people are currently infected with HPV. At least 50 percent of sexually active men and women acquire genital HPV infection at some point in their lives. By age 50, at least 80 percent of women will have acquired genital HPV infection. About 6.2 million Americans get a new genital HPV infection each year." <http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm> Center for Disease Control (CDC)

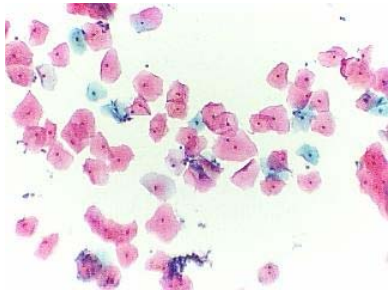


## How Can I Get HPV?

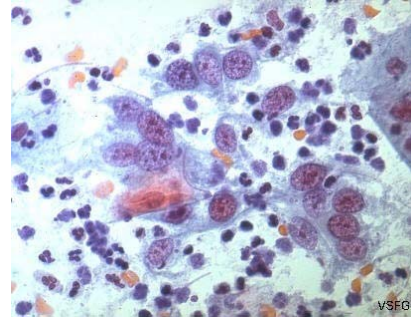
HPV infections that are considered STD's are contracted through sexual contact. This disease is transmitted through skin-to-skin contact and may not necessarily be prevented by a condom. HPV contraction is not limited to sexual intercourse, but can also be transmitted and contracted through oral sex as well.

## How Can I Tell If I Have HPV? What are the Symptoms?

The best way to find out if you have HPV is to visit your doctor every year. Because all types of HPV do not show symptoms, such as genital warts, it is important to see your doctor once you become sexually active and at least once a year thereafter.



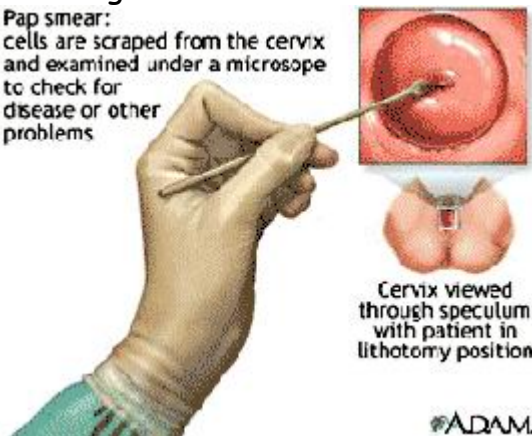
Normal Pap Smear



Abnormal Pap Smear

It is very difficult to diagnose HPV in males since there are no diagnostic tests. If a woman has HPV, it is likely that her partners may have contracted the disease. If men notice any symptoms or have been with anyone with HPV, they should visit their doctor. It is important that women visit their [Gynecologist](#) every year for a [Pap smear](#). If the Pap test results are abnormal, which means that there are abnormal cells in her [cervix](#), then there is a good chance that she has HPV. Her doctor will then determine what kind of treatment is right for her.

Pap smear:  
cells are scraped from the cervix  
and examined under a microscope  
to check for  
disease or other  
problems



©ADAM.

Some people with HPV develop genital warts that are easily seen by the naked eye. "Genital warts are soft, moist, or flesh colored and appear in the genital area within weeks or months after infection. They sometimes appear in clusters that resemble cauliflower-like bumps, and are raised or flat, small

or large. Genital warts can show up in women on the vulva and cervix, and inside and surrounding the vagina and anus. In men, genital warts can appear on the scrotum or penis. There are cases where genital warts have been found on the thigh and groin."

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**[picture] WARNING: These photos are meant for educational purposes only. These photos are graphic and may be considered offensive. Please use discretion when viewing.**

<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/stdhvpv.htm> National Institute of Health: U.S. Department of Health Services

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## Can I Get Rid of HPV? Is There a Cure?

Since HPV is a [virus](#), there is no cure. There are many treatment options that may make the symptoms disappear, but they may return later and may never go away. If you contract HPV, you will have the disease for the rest of your life. You are also susceptible to re-contract other forms of the disease throughout your life as well. Even if you have successful treatment of HPV, you will still have the disease and can infect others.

HPV treatment options may include:

- topical creams
- freezing ([cryosurgery](#))
- burning ([electrocautery](#))
- [LEEP procedure](#)
- [laser treatment](#).



Women who have an [abnormal pap smear](#) will have to undergo further testing to determine which type of treatment is right for them. A doctor will determine whether or not they have HPV and will do DNA testing to determine if they are high risk or low risk. Those with HPV may have [cervical dysplasia](#), which can be low, moderate or high. The higher the dysplasia, the worse the risk of cancer in the future. If further testing is needed, your doctor may want to conduct a [colposcopy](#) examination, where your doctor will use a colposcope (a lighted magnifying device) to determine the areas of infection. Once it is determined where the infected area is, the doctor may decide to do a [biopsy](#) of cells to see if there is cancer and the most common treatment is a LEEP procedure, which will remove all infected areas ([lesions](#)) from the cervix. After HPV has been treated, women will still have to visit their doctor occasionally to make sure the symptoms do not return.



Over the past few years, there has been testing done on [vaccines](#) for HPV, but they are not ready to be used on the public and are not yet available. There is hope that a vaccine will be ready in the next couple of years, but that is not guaranteed.



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This disease can cause complications with pregnancy in the future, but if contracted, you can still have a healthy, full life!

Being diagnosed with HPV is not the end of the world as long as you visit your doctor if you notice symptoms. The earlier it is detected, the less likelihood of further complications. That should help with every aspect of life!

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## Can HPV Lead to Worse Diseases?

HPV is a cause for [Cervical Cancer](#) in women. It may also lead to Vulva cancer, anal cancer and penile cancer (rare).

- There are four types (out of 70) of HPV that are strongly related to Cancer
- There are six other types that are less strongly related to Cancer.

If you smoke and have HPV, it would be a very good idea to quit because smoking enhances your chances for difficulties associated with HPV and getting cervical cancer.

# How Can I Protect Myself?

The best way to eliminate your chances for HPV is to practice Abstinence, or no sexual activity. If you are going to be sexually active, it is best to be in a long-term relationship with a monogamous (only that person) partner. When deciding whether or not to have sex with that partner, learn about their previous sexual history.

If you choose to have sex and are not in a long-term, monogamous relationship, try to choose partners who are less likely to be infected and make sure to use a condom, which will help to prevent HPV contraction. [Condoms](#) are not 100% effective and in some cases may not prevent HPV contraction, so make sure to make informed decisions regarding with whom you are sexually active.

If you choose to be sexually active and have HPV, make sure to TELL YOUR PARTNER so they can protect themselves and decide if they want to put themselves at risk. It is always a good idea to share your sexual history with your partner and vice versa....it can't hurt!



## Where else can I find information?

### Division of STD Prevention (DSTDP)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/std](http://www.cdc.gov/std)

Order Publications Online at [www.cdc.gov/std/pubs/](http://www.cdc.gov/std/pubs/)

### American Social Health Association

P.O. Box 13827

Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-9940

919-361-8400

<http://www.ashastd.org>

### National Library of Medicine Medline Plus

8600 Rockville Pike

Bethesda, MD 20894

1-800-338-7657

<http://medlineplus.gov>

### CDC National STD and AIDS Hotline

1-800-227-8922 or 1-800-342-2437

<http://www.ashastd.org/nah>

### Planned Parenthood 1-800-320-PLAN

### Chicago HPV Support Group

Chicago, IL

(773) 660-0416

E-mail: [info@chicagohelp.org](mailto:info@chicagohelp.org)

Web: [www.chicagohelp.org](http://www.chicagohelp.org)

### Images/Links:

**WARNING: Some of these photos are graphic and may be considered offensive to some. Please use discretion when viewing photos of HPV.**

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/2004HPV%20Report.pdf>. CDC January 2004

Report to Congress

<http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/sfcityclinic/stdbasics/hpv.asp>. San Francisco City Clinic, HPV Photos

<http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/mfrisby/cervixphotos.htm>. Cervix Photos

<http://www.gothpv.net/>. GotHPV.net information resources and support group.

<http://www.hpvfaq.com/>. HPV Q&A Forum.

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