



What is HPV and how can it affect my health?

HPV (human papillomavirus) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). Intimate, skin-to-skin contact is responsible for the transmission of HPV. Nearly all sexually active men and women will have sexually transmitted HPV at some point in their lifetime. For the majority of men who have HPV, their immune system will clear their body of the infection. For others, HPV may persist and result in:

- anogenital warts
- precancers
- anal cancer
- oropharynx cancer
- penile cancer
- transmission of HPV to intimate partners

Did you know?

Three out of four people diagnosed with oral cancer are men and over 60% of oropharyngeal cancers are linked to HPV.

How do I know I have HPV?

Nearly all adult men and women will have HPV in their lifetime, although this will hopefully change as more boys and girls are vaccinated against HPV. For most individuals, HPV has no symptoms and infected individuals are unaware that they have the infection. Since the 1940s, women have been regularly screened for HPV. Unfortunately, there is no standard test or screening process to detect HPV in men. However, individuals with the below risk factors may want to consult their providers regarding screening options.

What can I do so I don't catch HPV?

There is no cure for HPV, but there are steps males and their parents can take to reduce their chances of contracting the virus.

Vaccination is key in a person's fight against HPV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and American Academy of Pediatrics recommends routine HPV vaccination for girls and boys aged 11-12 in the US (for more information on vaccination, please see our Vaccination Fact Sheets). Gardasil is approved in the US for use in males starting at 9 and up to 26 years old, if not previously vaccinated.

In the UK, the government is actively considering which populations should have access to the vaccine. The HPV and Anal Cancer Foundation is part of an effort to give boys equal access to HPV protection (HPVAction.org).



The younger a person is vaccinated, the more effective the vaccine. This is because a person who is vaccinated at a younger age has a higher immune response, as well as a higher likelihood they have not already been exposed to the virus. Individuals in this age group and parents of young individuals in this age group should talk to their provider about the vaccine.

While condoms do not fully protect a person from HPV, sexually active individuals should use barrier methods (i.e. condoms and dental dams) during every sex act, every time. Because HPV is transmitted through skin-to-skin contact, areas left exposed while wearing a condom during sexual activity are vulnerable to HPV transmission.

If an individual notices any changes on his genitals or anus as far as growths, blisters, warts or other skin abnormalities, he should consult his physician immediately. For more information on HPV, HPV-related cancer and vaccination, please visit our website at:

www.analcancerfoundation.org.

For a glossary of terms, please see our Common HPV and Anal Cancer Terms page.

These fact sheets were reviewed by an oncologist and a nurse.