



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 women 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
- oropharyngeal cancer
- cervical cancer
- vaginal cancer
- vulvar cancer
- transmission of HPV to intimate partners

How do I know I have HPV?

To screen for cervical cancer caused by HPV, it is recommended that women 21 years of age and older receive pap tests. A pap test can come back either (1) normal, (2) inconclusive, equivocal or ASC-US, or (3) abnormal. Depending on these results, one's provider may suggest further screening such as the HPV test or a colposcopy.

Guidelines as to when a woman should get a pap test are listed on this page. These intervals vary based on age and co-testing. For some women, a provider may recommend an HPV test in conjunction with a pap test. HPV tests are different from pap tests and are used to test for the presence of HPV in cells to determine the presence of high-risk strains. Cells are collected at the same time and in the same manner as a pap test. The HPV test is not recommended for women under the age of 30.

HPV Screening Guidelines for Women

<u>Age</u>	<u>Screening Protocol</u>
21-30	Screen with a pap test every three years
30-65	Screen with pap test every three years <i>or</i> screen every five years with a pap test and HPV test co-testing

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

There is no cure for HPV, but there are steps women can take to reduce their chances of contracting the infection.

Vaccination is key in the fight against HPV. Both Gardasil and Cervarix are approved for females between the ages of 9 and 26 in the US. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends routine vaccination for girls and boys aged 11-12. The earlier one is vaccinated, the more



effective the vaccine. Individuals in this age group and caregivers of young individuals in this age group should talk to their provider about the vaccine (For more information on HPV vaccination in the US, please visit our US HPV Vaccination Fact Sheets).

In the UK, females in year 8 at school receive the HPV vaccine through the NHS (for more information on HPV vaccination in the UK, please visit our UK HPV Vaccination Fact Sheets).

Barrier methods (i.e. condoms and dental dams) should be used during every sex act every time. Although condoms do not fully protect one from HPV, they reduce the chances of contracting HPV.

If an individual notices any changes on her genitals or anus as far as growths, blisters, warts or other skin abnormalities, she should consult her provider immediately. Typically HPV is asymptomatic and infected individuals are usually unaware that they have the infection. 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.