



Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

[Home](#)

HPV and Men – Fact Sheet



Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common [sexually transmitted infection \(STI\)](#) in the United States. HPV vaccines can prevent some of the health effects HPV causes. This fact sheet answers basic questions about HPV and men.

What is HPV?

HPV is a very common STI. Among 15- to 59-year-olds, 2 in 5 (40%) people will have HPV. There are many different types of HPV; most do not cause any health problems.

HPV is a different virus than [HIV](#) or ([HSV](#)) herpes.

How do men get HPV?

You can get HPV by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus. It most commonly spreads during anal or vaginal sex. It also spreads through close skin-to-skin touching during sex. HPV can spread even when a person with the infection has no signs or symptoms.

If you are sexually active, you can get HPV even if you have had sex with only one person. Symptoms can appear years after you have sex with someone who has the infection. This makes it hard to know when you first got it.

What are the symptoms of HPV?

Most men who get HPV never have symptoms. The infection usually goes away by itself. But, if HPV does not go away, it can cause genital warts or certain kinds of cancer.

Talk to your healthcare provider about anything new or unusual on your penis, scrotum, anus, mouth, or throat. This includes:

- Warts,
- Unusual growths,
- Lumps, or
- Sores.

Will HPV cause health problems for me?

Most HPV infections go away on their own and don't cause any health problems. However, if HPV does not go away, it can cause health problems like genital warts. It also can cause [certain kinds of cancer](#).

We do not know why HPV causes health problems in some people and not others.

What are the symptoms of genital warts?

Genital warts usually appear as a small bump or group of bumps in the genital area. They can be small or large, raised or flat, or shaped like a cauliflower. The warts may go away, stay the same, or grow in size or number. A healthcare provider can usually diagnose genital warts 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 itself isn't cancer but it can cause changes in the body that lead to cancer. HPV infections usually go away by themselves. When they don't, they can cause certain kinds of cancer to grow. These include:

- Cervical cancer in women
- Penile cancer in men
- Anal cancer in both women and men
- [Oropharyngeal cancer](#), cancer in the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils

All of these cancers come from HPV infections that did not go away. Cancer grows very slowly. The diagnosis may not be until years, or even decades, after a person gets HPV. Currently, there is no way to know who will get cancer after getting HPV.

How common are cancers from HPV in men?

Cancers from HPV are not common in men.

Certain men are more likely to develop cancers from HPV:

- Men with weak immune systems (including those who are living with HIV).
- Men who receive anal sex are more likely to get anal HPV. They may develop anal cancer.

Is there testing for HPV in Men?

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

CDC does not recommend routine testing (also called 'screening') for HPV in men. CDC also does not recommend routine testing for diseases from HPV before there are signs or symptoms in men. Some healthcare providers offer anal Pap tests to men who may be at greater risk for anal cancer. This includes men with HIV or men who receive anal sex. If you have symptoms and have concerns about cancer, please see a healthcare provider.

Can I receive treatment for HPV or health problems that develop from HPV?

There is no specific treatment for HPV. But, there are treatments for health problems that develop from HPV. Your healthcare provider can treat genital warts with prescription medication. Cancers from HPV are more treatable when found and treated early. For more information, visit www.cancer.org.

How can I lower my chance of getting HPV?

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

- *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.
- *Use condoms the right way every time you have sex.* This can lower your chances of getting all STIs, including HPV. However, HPV can infect areas the condom does not cover. So, condoms may not offer full protection against getting HPV.

Can I get the HPV vaccine?

In the United States, the [HPV vaccination](#) recommendation is for:

- All preteens (including boys and girls) at age 11 or 12 years (or can start at age 9 years)
- Everyone through age 26 years, if not vaccinated already.

Vaccination is not recommended for everyone older than age 26 years. However, some adults age 27 through 45 years who are not already vaccinated may decide to get the HPV vaccine after speaking with their healthcare provider about their risk for new HPV infections and the possible benefits of vaccination.

HPV vaccination for ages 27 through 45 provides less benefit. Most sexually active adults have already been exposed to HPV, although vaccination does not target all HPV types.

At any age, having a new sex partner is a risk factor for getting a new HPV infection. People who are already in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship are not likely to get a new HPV infection.

Learn more about [who should get an HPV vaccine](#).

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 on your or your partner's:

- Penis,
- Scrotum,
- Anus,
- Mouth, or
- Throat

Anything new or unusual could be warts, unusual growths, lumps, or sores.

Even if you are healthy, you and your sex partner(s) may also want to get tested for other STIs.


If you or your partner have genital warts, stop having sex until you no longer have warts. We do not know how long a person is able to spread HPV after warts go away.

What does HPV mean for my relationship?

HPV infections are usually temporary. A person may have HPV for many years before it causes health problems. If you or your partner receive a diagnosis of a disease from HPV, 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 always 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 STIs with each other.

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