

HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV) FACT SHEET

What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a virus, and the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. Some health effects caused by HPV can be prevented with vaccines. HPV also causes common skin warts. There are many different types of HPV.

What are the symptoms of HPV?

Most people with HPV do not know they are infected and never develop symptoms or health problems from it. Some people find out they have HPV when they get genital warts. Women may find out they have HPV when they get an abnormal Pap test result (during cervical cancer screening). Common skin warts can appear anywhere on the body, but are frequently found on fingers, hands, knees and elbows. Plantar warts are usually found on the sole of the foot.

How is HPV spread?

You can get HPV by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus. It is most commonly spread during vaginal or anal sex. HPV can be passed even when an infected person has no signs or symptoms. Common skin warts are spread through close contact with an infected person.

How can you prevent the spread of HPV?

- *Get vaccinated.* HPV vaccines are safe and effective. They can protect males and females against diseases (including cancers) caused by HPV when given in the recommended age groups (see "Who should get vaccinated?" below). HPV vaccines are given in three shots over six months; it is important to get all three doses.

If you are sexually active:

- Use latex condoms the right way every time you have sex. This can lower your chances of getting HPV. But HPV can infect areas that are not covered by a condom - so condoms may not give full protection against getting HPV;
- Be in a mutually monogamous relationship - or have sex only with someone who only has sex with you.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

All boys and girls ages 11 or 12 years should get vaccinated. Catch-up vaccines are recommended for males through age 21 and for females through age 26, if they did not get vaccinated when they were younger. The vaccine is also recommended for gay and bisexual men (or any man who has sex with a man) through age 26. It is also recommended for men and women with compromised immune systems (including people living with HIV/AIDS) through age 26, if they did not get fully vaccinated when they were younger.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/cd/> or <http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/>