

S.T.A.H.L. NEWS

STUDENTS TALKING ABOUT HEALTHY LIFESTYLES...WORDS OF WHIZ-DOM

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HPV: the most common STI

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) on the planet. Nearly 79 million Americans (25%) currently have it. And every year 14 million more people get it.



HPV Get in the know.

Genital HPV Infection

According to the CDC, genital human papillomavirus, also known as HPV, is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). Over 100 varieties of HPV exist, with more than 40 different strains specifically affecting the mouth, throat, and genital areas of both males and females.

In most cases, HPV goes away by itself and may not cause any health problems, BUT, it's important to be **AWARE** of this STI because most people do not know that they have the virus and it can cause serious health problems.

Are You AWARE?

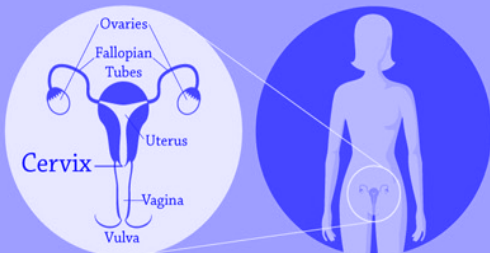
- ◆ **Anyone who has ever engaged in, or is currently engaging in, sexual activity can get HPV.**
- ◆ HPV is transmitted through direct skin-to-skin contact. It can be passed during vaginal, anal, and/or oral sex. Penetrative sex is not the only way you can acquire HPV. It can also be transmitted through skin-to-skin genital contact or rubbing.
- ◆ Approximately 75% to 80% of United States males and females are infected with HPV in their lifetime.
- ◆ According to the CDC, it is so common that nearly all sexually active individuals will get HPV at some point in their lives, even if he/she has only had sex with one partner.

Potential Health Problems

In most cases, your body can defeat HPV infections before the virus can lead to any health problems. In fact, 90% of HPV infections go away by themselves within two years. If the virus does persist, or does not go away on its own, it can cause normal cells to become abnormal which may lead to the following problems:

- ◆ **Genital warts** are small bumps in the genital area. They can be small, large, raised, flat, or shaped like a cauliflower. Warts can appear within weeks or months after sexual contact with an infected partner (this person may or may not show signs/symptoms of genital warts). According to the CDC, the types of HPV that can cause genital warts are not the same as the types that can cause cancers.
- ◆ **Cervical cancer** is cancer that forms in tissues of the cervix.

The cervix is the lower, narrow end of the uterus (womb) that connects the uterus to the vagina (birth canal).



Cervical cancer is usually a slow growing cancer that may not have symptoms. According to the National Cancer Institute, cervical cancer is almost always caused by HPV infection.

- ◆ **Other cancers caused by HPV** include some vaginal, vulvar, penile, anal, and oropharyngeal cancers.
- ◆ **Recurrent respiratory papillomatosis (RRP)** is a very rare condition caused by warts growing in the throat.

Help Reduce Your Risk

- ◆ Practice abstinence — it is the only 100% effective way to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STI's).
- ◆ Have a monogamous sexual relationship with one partner. This reduces your risk of being exposed to HPV.
- ◆ Know your partner's sexual health status. Ask if he/she has been infected, and when the last time he/she was tested.
- ◆ If you are sexually active, get tested for STI's regularly and practice SAFER sex every time you engage in sexual activity. Utilizing a condom every time you engage in penetrative sexual activity can lower your risk of HPV, but remember HPV can infect areas that are not covered by a condom, so condoms may not fully protect against HPV.
- ◆ Get vaccinated. HPV vaccines are safe, effective, and available for males and females.
- ◆ Get a regular Pap test. Although this won't diagnose HPV, it can identify abnormal cells that are caused by HPV.



**Interested in HPV vaccines and women's health services?
Contact IUP Health Service at
health-inquiry@iup.edu or 724-357-2550**

Testing and Treatment

The most common way a medical provider will diagnose an HPV infection is by a visible inspection of warts and lesions. If there are no visible signs of infection, the following tests are available:

- ◆ **Pap tests** collect a sample of cells from the cervix or vagina to reveal if there are any abnormalities that may lead to cancer.
- ◆ **Vinegar (acetic acid) solution tests** turn HPV-infected genital areas white, making it easier to identify difficult-to-see lesions.
- ◆ **DNA tests** recognize DNA of high-risk strains of HPV.

There is no treatment for HPV, but there are treatments for the health problems that are caused by the virus.

- ◆ **Genital warts** may remain the same, grow more numerous, or go away on their own. They can be removed with medication or treated by a medical provider.
- ◆ **Cervical cancer** and other HPV-related cancers are more treatable when diagnosed and treated in their early stages.

For more information about HPV, related health problems, diagnosis, and treatment, contact a medical provider.

Indiana Sexual Health Resources
IUP Health Service..... 724-357-2550
Adagio Health.....724-349-2022

Health AWAREness, Center for Health and Well-Being
Suites on Maple East, G-59
health-awareness@iup.edu | 724-357-4799 | @IUPAWARE
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