

Human Papillomavirus(HPV)

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the United States. There are over 100 different types of HPV. It is a viral infection that can cause different kinds of warts and different types of cancer.

Frequent Signs & Symptoms

There are often NO signs or symptoms. Most people who are infected do not know they are infected because they never develop symptoms or health problems. In most cases, the body's immune system defeats the virus before warts occur. When warts do occur they vary depending of the type of HPV involved.

Symptoms may include:

- Genital warts
- Common warts
- Flat warts
- Plantar warts

Causes

HPV is primarily spread through skin-to-skin contact. Genital HPV is passed from one person to another during sexual intercourse. You can become infected by having vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse with a partner who has the virus. Infection can occur even if your partner does not have symptoms.

The types of HPV that cause genital warts are not the same as the types that cause cancers.

Prevention

There are vaccines available to help prevent HPV infections.

The only way to avoid contracting genital HPV is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse (abstinence).

If you are sexually active, ways to reduce your risk include:

- Maintaining a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who is not infected.
- Using condoms the right way EVERY time you have sex. This includes condoms with oral intercourse.

Additional Information: _____

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Diagnosis

Your health care provider will need to do an exam of any visible symptoms such as warts. Your provider might be able to diagnose HPV based on genital wart symptoms. There is no definitive testing to provide a patient with their HPV "status". There are HPV tests that can be used to screen for cervical cancer in women with Pap testing.

Treatment

In most cases, HPV goes away on its own and does not cause any health problems. There is no cure for the virus itself. Warts often go away without treatment.

Medications or procedures can be used to eliminate warts. Cervical precancer can be treated before cancer develops.

People with weakened immune systems are likely to fight off the HPV virus.

Activity

Have an open and honest discussion with any partners about your diagnosis. Condoms can reduce the risk of transmission but cannot eliminate the risk. Avoid any sexual contact when symptoms are present to help reduce the risk of transmission but keep in mind transmission can occur when symptoms aren't noticeable. Women should have yearly pelvic exams and Pap screenings per guidelines.

Complications

HPV can cause different kinds of cancers. Nearly all cervical cancers are caused by HPV. HPV can cause other cancers such as cancer of the vagina, vulva, anus, penis, and the back of the throat (oropharyngeal).

If symptoms worsen or do not improve, return to the clinic.

If you have worsening of symptoms when the Health and Wellness Center is unavailable, please follow up with the local ER or Urgent Care.