

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



Department of Health & Human Services

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Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

What is HPV?

HPV is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that is caused by Human Papillomavirus. It is a group of viruses that include different strains or types. HPV is NOT the same as HIV or genital herpes (HSV).

Who Can Get HPV?

Both men and women can be infected with one or more strains of the HPV virus. At least 50% of sexually active people get an HPV infection at some point in their lives.

How Do You Get HPV?

The most common way to spread HPV is through sexual contact of an infected person with another. Since most HPV infections have no signs or symptoms, many people are unaware they are infected and can spread the virus. Rarely, HPV can be spread from a mother to a newborn baby during vaginal delivery.

What are the Symptoms of HPV?

Most people who get HPV have no symptoms. Some people get visible genital warts or have changes to the cervix, vulva, anus or penis.

How Long after Exposure Do Symptoms First Begin?

The incubation period of HPV can vary, so it is very hard to determine when the person got infected.

How is HPV Diagnosed?

Most women are diagnosed when they have an abnormal Pap test. No HPV tests are available for men.

Are there Complications?

A small number of people may get an infection that doesn't clear up. HPV infection can cause cervical and other cancers. A baby that is exposed to HPV very rarely develops warts in the throat or voice box.

Is There Treatment for HPV?

There is no "cure" for HPV infection, and in most people the infection goes away on its own. There is treatment for the health problems that HPV can cause, such as genital warts, cervical changes, and cervical cancer.

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How can HPV be Prevented?

There is a vaccine which can prevent the most common types of HPV. The vaccine is approved for females who are 9 – 26 years old. The vaccine is given in a series of three shots. Contact your doctor for more information. Abstaining from all sexual activity is the only sure way to prevent HPV. A condom may reduce the risk of HPV. However, it is not known how much protection condoms provide since not all areas exposed to the HPV virus are covered by a condom.

Girls and women with prior HPV infection with one or more HPV types will be protected from the remaining HPV (6, 11, 16, 18) types.

For more information on Human Papillomavirus (HPV), call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.

For additional copies, visit our website at www.oakgov.com/health.

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