

Facts about HPV

- Most HPV infections occur in young people aged 15 to 24.
- It affects both males and females.
- HPV is considered to be the most common STI in Canada.
- Often there are no visible signs or symptoms.
- There are more than 100 different types of HPV, 40 of which are spread through sexual contact.

Test your knowledge.
Take the HPV Challenge at
hpvinfo.ca.

Profile of the ONLY VISIBLE SIGN OF HPV

AKA:

genital warts

Contact info:

you get them through skin-to-skin contact

Distinguishing features:

looks like small cauliflower, red or white

Emotional profile:

itching, burning, embarrassing

Where you'll find them:

on or inside the sex organs

Dislikes:

genital warts are less likely to show up if you use condoms or get vaccinated

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Respect *yourself*,
your partner,
and *your community*.

HPV facts
for Aboriginal youth

What is HPV?

The Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus. Often, it has no signs or symptoms. There are more than 100 different kinds of HPV, with at least 40 that can lead to or cause genital warts and cancer.

Am I at risk?

The risk of HPV infection is highest among people aged 15 to 24. The earlier you become sexually active, the greater your exposure to the risk of HPV infection. HPV affects people of all races—both men and women. People in same-sex relationships can be infected and so can anyone having oral sex.

How do I know if I have it?

You might not. Since not all HPV infections have symptoms, you may not be able to tell if you (or your partner) are infected. Genital warts are often the only visible sign that someone has an HPV infection. In fact, genital warts seem to affect as many young men as young women.

Can genital warts be treated?

Yes, genital warts can be treated. In some cases, warts are treated at home with medicine and in others at a clinic, with medicine, freezing or surgery. But no treatment can destroy the virus. When the warts are gone, it does not mean that the HPV is gone. In 1 out of every 4 cases, the warts will return within 3 months.



How does HPV affect young women?

- You may not see or feel any signs of the infection.
- HPV can cause genital warts.
- In women, the HPV virus may cause changes in the cells of the cervix (located at the end of the vagina). Changes to these cells may slowly grow into cancer. You cannot see or feel these changes.
- HPV can also cause cancers of the anus, vulva, vagina, head and neck.
- In 2006, Health Canada approved HPV vaccination for young women ages 9 to 26.

How does HPV affect young men?

- You may not see or feel any signs of the infection.
- HPV can cause genital warts.
- Some very rare cancers in young men are caused by HPV and usually develop later in life: up to 90% of anal cancers (more common among men who have sex with men), 40 to 50% of cancers of the penis, and 10 to 20% of cancers of the mouth, head, and neck.
- In 2010, Health Canada approved HPV vaccination for young men ages 9 to 26.

What can I do to protect myself against HPV?

- Talk to your Elders and community leaders about sexual health issues. Traditional stories and practices can be combined with talking to your health-care provider about your health.
- Have sex with only one partner or reduce the number of partners.
- Always use a condom. Remember, condoms provide less protection against HPV than against some other STIs because you can get HPV from infected areas not covered by the condom.
- Keep tobacco sacred. Quit smoking. (Smoking makes the body less able to fight off HPV infection and is a factor in the development of various cancers.)
- Practice abstinence. (HPV is spread through skin-to-skin contact.)
- HPV types 6 and 11 are responsible for 90% of genital warts. HPV types 16 and 18 are responsible for 70% of all cervical cancers. Two vaccines are available in Canada; one protects against types 16 and 18 and the other against all four types.
- HPV vaccination does not replace the need for regular Pap tests.
- A Pap test is designed to find any abnormal cells early. They can then be treated. The Pap test is done by a health-care provider who takes a sample of cells from your cervix and sends it to a lab for testing. Girls should have their first Pap test within 3 years of any sexual contact or by age 21.

Do what you can because only you can protect yourself!

Keep the Nation healthy. Visit hpvinfo.ca