

## How can HPV be prevented?

- Ask your health care provider about the **HPV vaccine** for you and your children. The HPV vaccine can protect people between the ages of 9 and 26 against some of the most common types of HPV that can lead to disease and cancer.
- If you have sex, **use latex condoms** every time. Keep in mind that HPV can infect areas not covered by the condom. While condoms do not provide 100% protection, they are the best available form of protection for people who are sexually active.
- If you have sex, **stay with one partner who only has sex with you**. Use condoms unless tests show that your partner does not have STDs.

## What are other ways to stay healthy?

- If you are a woman over the age of 18, or if you are under 18 and sexually active, **have a Pap test every year**, or as often as recommended by your health care provider.
- If you think you have genital warts or think you have been exposed to HPV, **see your doctor or go to your local STD clinic**. To find the clinic closest to you in Texas, visit [knowmystatus.org](http://knowmystatus.org) or call 2-1-1.
- If you are diagnosed with genital warts, **do not have sex until you have finished your treatment and the doctor tells you it is okay**.
- If you are diagnosed with genital warts, **ask your sex partner(s) to be checked for genital warts and other STDs**.

## Where can I learn more?



**KNOW MY [STATUS](http://www.knowmystatus.org).ORG**

Go to [www.knowmystatus.org](http://www.knowmystatus.org) to learn more about HPV and other STDs and find out where to go for testing, support and treatment in Texas.

DSHS HIV/STD Program HPV website:  
[www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd/info/hpv](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd/info/hpv)

CDC HPV vaccine website:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/hpv/vaccine.html>

For HIV/STD testing locations in Texas, call:  
**2-1-1**

For other HIV/STD questions, call:  
1 (800) CDC-INFO (English/Español)  
1 (888) 232-6348 (TTY)

## What you should know about

# HPV

human  
papillomavirus



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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF  
STATE HEALTH SERVICES

## What is HPV?

**Human papillomavirus (HPV)** infection is the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the U.S. Most sexually active people will have HPV at some point in their lives. There are many different types of HPV.

HPV does not cause health problems for most people. However, certain types of HPV can cause cervical, anal, vaginal, vulvar and throat cancers in women. HPV can also cause throat, anal and penile cancers in men.

Other types of HPV can cause genital warts – growths around the vagina, penis or anus.

## How do people get HPV?

HPV is easily spread by skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity with another person.

Because a person can have HPV for a long time without knowing it, there is often no way to know who gave it to you or when you got it.

Sexually active younger women and teen girls are at greater risk for HPV infection because their cervical cells are not fully mature.

## What are the symptoms of HPV?

Most people with HPV have no symptoms. The most commonly noticed symptom of HPV infection is genital warts.

## Can HPV be treated?

There is no cure for HPV. However, the body's immune system clears most HPV infections within a year.

Treatment is available for cervical cancer and the abnormal cell changes that can lead to cancer. Treatment is also available for genital warts caused by HPV.

## Is there a vaccine against HPV?

Yes, HPV vaccines can protect females and males against some of the most common types of the virus that can lead to genital warts or cancer. As of January 2012, there are two approved HPV vaccines – Cevarix® and Gardasil®. The vaccines consist of three shots that are given over a six-month period. The vaccines are most effective if started at 11 or 12 years of age.

## Who should get the HPV vaccine?

**Girls and women ages 9 to 26 can get Cevarix® or Gardasil®.** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends\* that all 11- or 12-year-old girls get either brand of vaccine to protect against the types of HPV that cause most cervical cancers. Gardasil also protects against most genital warts, as well as some cancers of the vulva, vagina and anus. Girls and young women ages 13 through 26 should get the HPV vaccine if they did not get any or all doses when they were younger.

**Boys and men ages 9 to 26 can get Gardasil®.** The CDC recommends\* Gardasil for all 11- or 12-year-old boys and for males ages 13-21 who did not get any or all doses when they were younger. CDC also recommends Gardasil for

gay and bisexual men (or any man who has sex with men) and men with compromised immune systems (including men with HIV) through age 26 if they did not get any or all doses when they were younger. All men may receive Gardasil through age 26.

\*U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention immunization recommendations. To learn more, go to [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines).

## Pap tests can prevent cervical cancer!

Women should have a Pap test every year, or as often as recommended by their health care provider. When a woman gets a Pap test (or “Pap smear”), her health care provider is looking at the cells of her cervix to make sure there are no abnormal cell changes (dysplasia) that could lead to cancer.

If abnormal cell changes are found early, they can be treated before becoming cancerous. Because HPV vaccines do not protect against all types of HPV that cause cervical cancer, vaccinated women should continue getting regular Pap tests.

## What do genital warts look like?

Genital warts appear as flesh-colored growths around the vagina, penis or anus. They may appear alone or in groups or clusters. The warts are usually painless, but they can cause itching or burning. Sometimes warts cannot be seen with the naked eye.

Genital warts may appear within several weeks after sexual contact, or they may take months to

appear. Some genital warts may grow in size and number and may look like cauliflower.

The types of HPV that cause genital warts are not the types that can lead to cancer.

## How are genital warts treated?

You will have to go to a doctor or health care provider to get treatment for genital warts. Possible treatment options include:

- Cryotherapy (freezing the warts off)
- Electrodessication (burning the warts off with electric current)
- Laser therapy (using intense light to destroy the warts)
- Surgery (cutting off the warts)
- Treating the warts with chemicals
- Prescription medication treatments

These treatments are just to remove the warts. They do not cure you of HPV and the warts may grow back.

**Never use over-the-counter wart treatments for genital warts.** These products can cause pain and harm your skin.

## What about HPV and pregnancy?

Most pregnant women with HPV do not have problems. However, active genital warts may cause problems during pregnancy or at birth. In rare cases, HPV can also be passed to a baby during childbirth. A pregnant woman should tell her doctor or health care provider if she or her sex partner(s) have ever had genital warts. Pregnant women should not get the HPV vaccine.