

HPV and Men: What you need to know



HPV? What is it? How can it affect me?

HPV is the human papillomavirus (HPV). Some types of HPV infect genital and anal skin, and are sexually transmitted.

HPV is very common—most sexually active people have HPV at some point in their lives.

HPV infections are usually not harmful and do not result in symptoms you can see. Most men never know they have HPV.

Some types of HPV can cause genital warts. These HPV types that cause warts are known as “low risk” because they are almost never found with genital or anal cancers.

Other types of HPV, called “high risk” types, can cause small cell changes of the penis and anus that the naked eye can’t see. These changes aren’t found very often though, and penile and anal cancers are very rare.

Should I get tested?

Right now, HPV tests are not approved for use with men outside of medical research studies. Experts are looking at ways to better screen men, and the current lack of testing options for males can be very frustrating.

To examine men, healthcare providers sometimes take a very close look at the genital area. If you notice any changes to your genital skin, get checked out by your healthcare provider.

How can I get HPV?

HPV is spread by skin-to-skin contact. This can occur with vaginal and anal sex, or just with genital-to-genital contact. It may be possible to transmit HPV through oral sex, but this is less common.

When one person in a relationship has HPV, it’s likely their partner shares the virus, too (although this can be difficult to prove).

How can I reduce my risk for HPV?

Not having sex is the only way to prevent HPV. Since HPV is so common, even those who have only had one partner can still get the virus.

Using condoms correctly each time you have sex reduces the risk of getting sexually transmitted infections, and might offer some protection against HPV. Keep in mind that skin in the anal/genital area not covered by a condom can still be affected.

Also, vaccines that prevent genital warts and anal cancer are available for boys and young men ages 9-26.



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