

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Disease and Prevention

What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is a common virus that is primarily spread through sexual contact. Up to 75 percent of HPV infections occur among people 15–24 years old. Almost all cervical cancers, anal cancers, and genital warts are caused by HPV. The types of HPV that can cause genital warts are not the same as the types that cause cancer. Some types of HPV can cause penile, anal, or head and neck cancers.

What are the symptoms of HPV?

Most of the time infected individuals have no symptoms and can spread the virus unknowingly. Some people know they have HPV because they have a symptom like genital warts. Women may find out they have HPV through cervical cancer screening (Pap tests) and HPV testing. Health care providers do not usually test for HPV unless they find abnormal cervical cell changes in a Pap test.

How can HPV infection be prevented?

The best way to prevent HPV infection is to abstain from all sexual activity. Even people with only one lifetime partner can get HPV if their partner had previous sexual partners. Using condoms during sex offers good protection against sexual

Who should get the vaccine and when should they get it?

The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice recommends that all girls age 11–12 years old should get vaccinated against HPV. Health care providers may also give the vaccine to girls as young as 9 years, and to girls and women aged 13–26 years who haven't gotten the vaccine yet.

One of the HPV vaccines is also licensed for boys and men ages 9–26 years to prevent genital warts. The ACIP recently approved a recommendation for routine vaccination of boys age 11–12 years. For unvaccinated males, the recommendation goes up through age 21. Health care providers may vaccinate boys as young as nine years and men aged 22–26 years old. Health care providers can offer the vaccine to males and give the vaccine upon request.

To be up-to-date on this immunization, males and females need three doses of the vaccines. Talk with your health care provider about the vaccine schedule. The HPV vaccine is not required for school attendance in Washington.

Are Pap tests still recommended for females that get the HPV vaccine?

Yes. The HPV vaccine does not protect against all HPV that can cause cancer and warts, so females still need Pap tests.

Where can I find the HPV vaccine?

Ask your doctor, nurse, or local health clinic to find out more about HPV vaccine and where you can get it. In Washington, the vaccine is available at no-cost for all children through age 18 as part of the state Childhood Vaccine Program. Health care providers may charge an administration fee (this fee may be waived if patient can't pay) or an office visit fee. For people age 19–26, most health insurance plans cover the vaccine for people recommended to get it. Infections like HPV. The HPV vaccines offer by far the best protection if given before sexual activity starts — they do not get rid of existing HPV infections. The HPV vaccine can prevent infections from some of the most common and serious types of HPV that cause warts, cervical and anal cancers.

What HPV vaccines are available?

Two HPV vaccines are available:

HPV4 is licensed for males and females. It protects against four common HPV types: two types that cause 75 percent of cervical cancer in women and most anal cancers in men, and two other types that cause most genital warts in females and males.

HPV2 is licensed only for females. It protects only against the two types of HPV that cause 75 percent of cervical cancer in women. For more information on HPV, the vaccine and cervical cancer visit these websites:

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For more information on HPV, the vaccine and cervical cancer visit these websites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/hpv

Washington State Department of Health

www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/Vaccines/HumanPapillomavirusHPV.aspx

American Sexual Health Association

www.ashastd.org

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org