



What is HPV?

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HPV is short for human papillomavirus and is a group of more than 150 related viruses. Each HPV virus in this large group is given a number which is called its HPV type. HPV is named for the warts (papillomas) some HPV types can cause. Some other HPV types can lead to cancer, especially cervical cancer. There are more than 40 HPV types that can infect the genital areas of males and females. But there are vaccines that can prevent infection with the most common types of HPV.



How do people get HPV?

HPV is transmitted through intimate skin-to-skin contact. You can get HPV by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus. It is most commonly spread during vaginal or anal sex. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). Anyone who is sexually active can get HPV, even if you have had sex with only one person. HPV is so common that nearly all sexually active men and women get it at some point in their lives. HPV can be passed even when an infected person has no signs or symptoms. You can develop symptoms years after you have sex with someone who is infected, making it hard to know when you first became infected.

More Q&A about the Health Effects of HPV

- [How common is HPV and the health problems caused by HPV?](http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm#a7)
(<http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm#a7>)
- [How does HPV cause cancer?](http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm#a4) (<http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm#a4>)

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