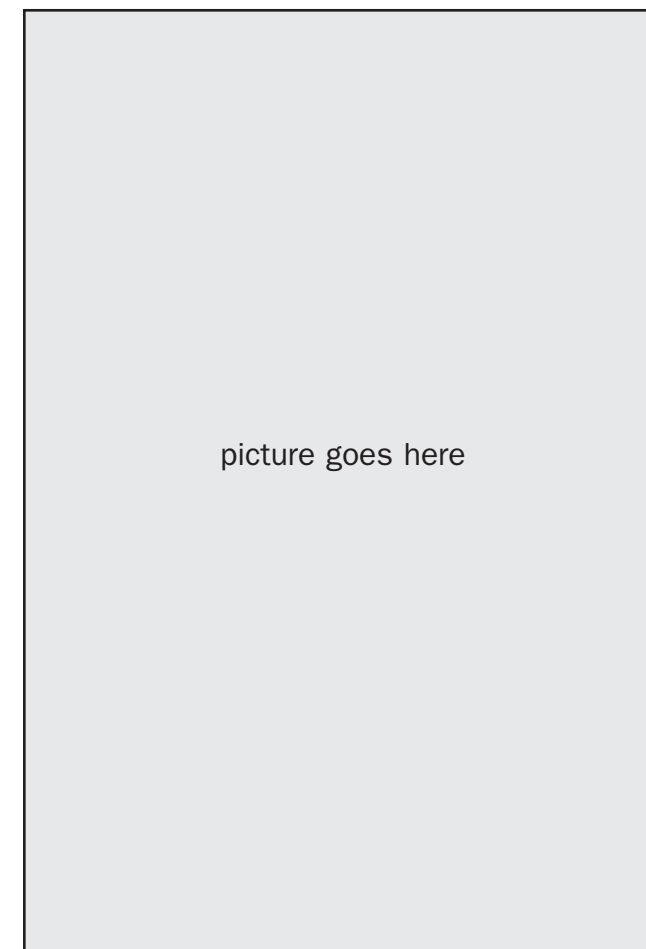


**[Headline goes here]**



**Do I need to know if I have genital HPV?**

Because most people will have genital HPV at some point in their lives and it usually goes away on its own, you don't need to be tested just to find out if you have genital HPV. However, it *is important for women to screen for the diseases that genital HPV infection can cause*, such as cervical cancer.

**Is there a genital HPV test for men?**

There is no approved genital HPV test for men, and the current HPV test is not useful for finding early signs of cancer in men. Fortunately, HPV-associated cancers in men are much less common than cervical cancer in women.

**Are there ways to reduce my risk?**

The surest way to prevent genital HPV is not to have sex. If you decide to be sexually active, limit the number of partners you have and choose your partners carefully. Also, the fewer partners your partner has had – the less likely he or she is to have genital HPV.

**What about condoms?**

When used consistently and correctly, a condom can protect you from certain sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. Condoms also prevent pregnancy. However, it is not known how much protection condoms provide against genital HPV, since areas that aren't covered by a condom can be exposed to the virus. Some studies show that condom use may lower the risk of cervical cancer and genital warts, which are caused by genital HPV.

**There's no blame, no shame about genital HPV**

It is natural for people who learn they have genital HPV to want to know who gave it to them. But there is no way to know for sure. The virus is very common. A person can have genital HPV for a very long time before it is detected. If you have genital HPV, don't blame your current partner – or assume that your partner is cheating. Genital HPV is not a sign that you or your partner has had sex outside of your relationship. Genital HPV is so common that even people who have only one lifetime partner sometimes have the virus.

**What about a vaccine?**

Although a genital HPV vaccine currently is not available, research shows there may be a vaccine to guard against certain types of genital HPV in the next few years. However, this does not reduce the importance of the Pap test as a valuable way to protect women's health.

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**It is important to know the link between genital HPV and cervical cancer**

It's a fact: high-risk types of genital HPV are linked to cervical cancer. But this cancer develops slowly and is highly preventable and curable with regular screening and follow-up.

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**Understand HPV: Don't be alarmed, be informed**

There are some important things to remember about genital HPV:

- Most sexually active people will have genital HPV sometime in their lives.
- Genital HPV usually goes away on its own, without causing any health problems.
- The most serious consequence of genital HPV is cervical cancer in women.
- Most women who get cervical cancer have not had regular Pap tests.
- Women should talk to a health care provider about getting screened for cervical cancer.
- It is important for both men and women to talk openly about genital HPV with their partners — so everyone is informed and able to make safe decisions about their health.



## HPV is common in men and women

There are many different types of human papillomavirus (HPV), a common virus. Some types of HPV can infect the skin and linings of the genitals (such as the penis, anus, cervix, vagina) of men and women. These types are called *genital HPV* and they are passed on by sex.

Genital HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. At least half of all sexually active men and women will have genital HPV at some point in their lives. Most will never even know it.

### Why haven't more people heard of it?

Genital HPV is not new. But a lot of people don't know about it because genital HPV infection usually has no symptoms and goes away on its own, without causing any health problems.

### How do you get genital HPV?

If you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex with an infected partner, you can get genital HPV. Both men and women can give and get genital HPV infection from their sex partners and not be aware of it — because they may not have any signs or symptoms of infection.

## Genital HPV does not cause health problems for most people

Most often, the virus goes away without causing any health problems. But some types of genital HPV can cause genital warts, and others have been linked to cervical cancer. Genital HPV types can be grouped as “low-risk” or “high-risk,” based on their link to cervical cancer.

### What does low-risk HPV mean?

Infection with low-risk types of genital HPV usually causes no problems. Sometimes, low-risk types can cause mild cell changes in a woman's cervix. These changes are harmless, temporary, and not visible to the naked eye. Low-risk HPV types can also cause genital warts. They are growths or bumps that appear in the genital areas of men and women. Genital warts are generally painless. They may be raised or flat, small or large, and single or multiple.

## Anyone who has ever had sex can get genital HPV infection

### What puts someone at risk for genital HPV?

If you have ever had sex (or genital contact) with another person, you are at risk for getting genital HPV infection. You may be at risk even if years have passed since you had sex. The more sex partners you have (and the more partners your partner has had), the higher your risk.

### Genital HPV also has been linked to these factors:

- Having sex at an early age
- Smoking
- Using oral contraceptives
- Poor nutrition
- Lack of circumcision in men
- Uncircumcised male partners for women
- Having other sexually transmitted infections or diseases (STDs)
- Weak immune system

Many treatment options are available for genital warts. But even after warts are treated, HPV may remain in the body. For this reason, it's not clear if treatment lowers the chance of giving genital HPV to a sex partner or not. If left untreated, genital warts may go away on their own, remain unchanged, or increase in size or number. Genital warts will not turn into cancer.

### What does high-risk HPV mean?

Infection with high-risk types of genital HPV usually causes no problems. But sometimes, high-risk types of genital HPV can cause cell changes that can lead to cancer over time — if left untreated. Certain high-risk types of genital HPV can cause cervical cancer in women. High-risk types of genital HPV also have

been linked to other cancers, including anal cancer in men who have sex with men. Most of the time, these infections do not cause health problems for anyone.

### Does high-risk HPV mean cancer?

No. High-risk HPV is not the same as cancer. It is the virus that *can* cause cancer if it lingers (persists) and changes cells over many years. Persistent genital HPV infection (that doesn't go away for years) is the main risk factor for cervical cancer.

### The good news is: cervical cancer is highly preventable with early detection and follow-up.

### How can women prevent cervical cancer?

There is a test, called the *Pap test*, which looks for cell changes caused by genital HPV. It finds cell changes early — so they can be treated *before* they turn into cancer. The Pap test can also find cancer in its early stages so it can be treated before it becomes a threat to a woman's health.

### Why should women get regular Pap tests?

The Pap test is the best way to screen for cervical cancer. Getting regular Pap tests can save a woman's life. About half of the women in the United States who develop cervical cancer have never had a Pap test.

### Should women worry about an abnormal Pap test result?

When abnormal cell changes are found, they are usually easy to treat. Not all Pap test abnormalities are the result of high-risk HPV infection. But follow-up with a health care provider is advised. This way, a women's health care provider can treat changes in the cervix caused by genital HPV infection to be sure they do not turn into life-threatening cervical cancer. The health care provider will also need to keep a close watch to be sure that these changes do not come back or get worse.

If a woman gets an unclear Pap test result, her health care provider may do a test for HPV DNA to direct next steps. For women over 30, this HPV test can also be used with the Pap test as part of routine cervical cancer screening.