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## How can I prevent HPV?

- ◆ **Don't have sex.** Vaginal, anal, and oral sex can all pass HPV and other STDs from one person to another.
- ◆ If you have sex, **use a latex condom every time.** Keep in mind that condoms may not always prevent HPV because the virus can occur in 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. Be sure to put the condom on before the penis touches the vagina, mouth, or anus.
- ◆ 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.

## How can I stay healthy?

- ◆ If you are a woman over the age of 18, or if you're sexually active, **have a Pap smear every year**, or as often as recommended by your doctor or health care provider. This is the best way to prevent cervical cancer caused by HPV.
  - ◆ If you think you have genital warts, or if you think you've been exposed to HPV, **see your doctor or go to your local STD clinic.** To find the clinic closest to you, call the Texas HIV/STD InfoLine at 1-800-299-2437.
  - ◆ If you are diagnosed with HPV or genital warts, **don't have sex until you have finished your treatment and the doctor tells you it is okay.**
  - ◆ If you are diagnosed with HPV or genital warts, **encourage your sex partner(s) to be tested.**
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### Where Can I Learn More About HPV?

The American Social Health Association (ASHA) maintains a network of local HPV support groups. To contact them, call 1-919-361-4848, or go to [www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org).

Also, call these free numbers for more information about:

- HPV and other STDs
- How to reduce your risk of getting herpes and other STDs, including HIV
- Where to go for testing, support, information and treatment

### Texas HIV/STD InfoLine

1 (800) 299-2437 (English/Español)  
Web site: [www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd)

### CDC-INFO (National HIV/STD Hotline)

1 (800) CDC-INFO  
1 (888) 232-6348 (TTY)



TEXAS

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State Health Services

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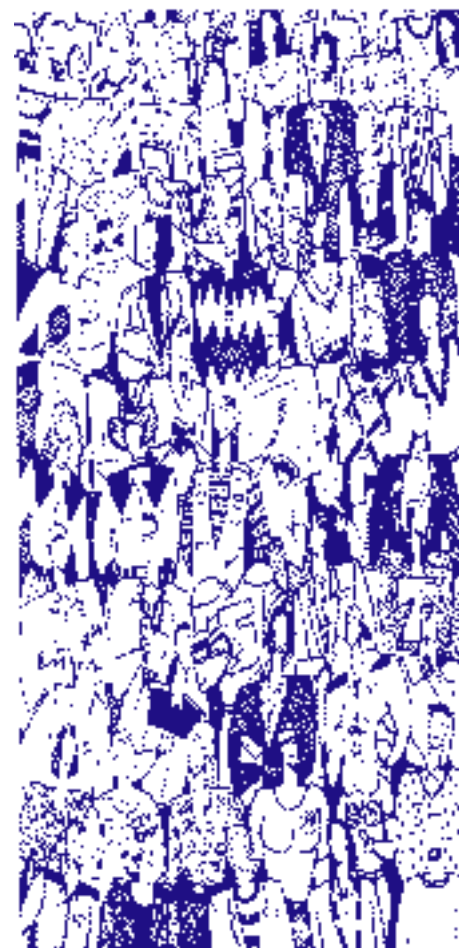
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What you should

know about

# HPV

Human Papillomavirus



Texas Department of State Health Services

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## What is HPV?

"HPV" stands for **Human Papillomavirus**. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the U.S. There are over 90 different types of HPV. Some types of HPV cause **genital warts**, while other types can cause **abnormal cell changes** (dysplasia) on the genital skin that can lead to cancer.

## How do people get HPV?

HPV is passed by direct, skin-to-skin contact during vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the infection. Although some types of HPV cause warts on other parts of the body, contact with these warts does not cause genital warts.

## What are the symptoms of HPV?

**Most people with HPV, especially men, don't have any symptoms.** This can make HPV hard to diagnose.

### *Genital Warts*

Genital warts may appear within several weeks after sexual contact, or they may take months to appear. The warts appear as flesh-colored, cauliflower-like growths or bumps around the vagina, penis, or anus. They may appear single or in groups or clusters. Warts are usually painless, but they can cause itching or burning. Sometimes warts are too hard to see with the naked eye. **The types of HPV that cause warts are not the types that can lead to cancer.**

### *Abnormal Cell Changes (Dysplasia)*

Some types of HPV cause cervical cancer. When a woman gets a **Pap smear**, her health care provider is looking at the cells of her cervix to make sure there are no abnormal changes that could lead to cancer.

**Cervical cancer can be prevented by having an annual Pap smear!** If abnormal cell changes are found early, they can be treated before becoming cancerous. Women should have a Pap smear every year, or as often as recommended by their doctor or health care provider.

HPV has also been linked to cancer of the penis and anus, but these cancers are very rare in the U.S.

## 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 wart off)
- ◆ **Electrocautery** (burning the wart off)
- ◆ **Laser therapy**
- ◆ **Treating the wart with chemicals**
- ◆ **Cutting off the wart**

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

**IMPORTANT: Never use over-the-counter wart treatments for genital warts!** These products can cause severe irritation and harm your skin.

## How are abnormal cells treated?

There is currently no treatment to cure HPV. However, there are many ways of treating abnormal cells in a woman's cervix. Your doctor or health care provider can explain treatment options and help you decide which treatment works best for you.

## What about HPV and pregnancy?

**It is very important for pregnant women to notify her doctor or health care provider if she or her sex partner(s) have had genital warts.** Most pregnant women who have had genital warts do not have problems during pregnancy or birth. However, some women may have genital warts that grow and bleed during pregnancy. Babies exposed to the wart-causing type of HPV during birth may develop growths in the throat that make breathing harder, but this is very rare. A woman with genital warts does not need to have a C-section (caesarian section) delivery unless the warts block the birth canal.

Some pregnant women with HPV may have increased abnormal cell changes (dysplasia) during pregnancy. The type of HPV that causes abnormal cell changes has not been found to cause problems for babies.

**Talk to your doctor or health care provider about what HPV treatment(s) are safe during pregnancy.**