



LENAWEE COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

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What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the United States. It can infect the genital areas, rectum, mouth, and throat. There are more than 40 types of HPV. Some can cause genital warts and certain cancers such as cervical, mouth, and throat cancer. A healthcare provider can usually diagnose genital warts by looking at them, Lenawee County Health Department can NOT diagnosis you with HPV by looking at your "warts". We can only diagnosis HPV through a pap smear.

How is HPV Spread?

HPV is most commonly spread during vaginal, oral or anal sex. It also spreads through close skin-to-skin touching during sex. A person with HPV can pass the infection to someone even when they have no signs or symptoms. HPV is spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact. You can get HPV by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus, even if they don't have signs or symptoms.

Symptoms of HPV

Genital HPV often has no symptoms but it can cause serious health problems, if not detected early. Most people with HPV never develop symptoms or health problems from it. In most cases (9 out of 10), HPV goes away on its own within two years without health problems. When HPV does not go away, it can lead to health problems like genital warts and cancer. Talk to your healthcare provider if you notice any of the following in your genital area, mouth, or throat:

- Warts
- Unusual growths, small bump or group of bumps in the genital area
- Lumps
- Sores

*They can be small or large, raised or flat, or shaped like a cauliflower. The warts may go away, stay the same, or grow in size or number. Genital warts can come back, even after treatment.

Reducing the Risk

- Get vaccinated, it can protect against diseases (including cancers) caused by HPV
- Using a condom or dental dam correctly
- Having one partner and communicating with that partner
- Women get tested for HPV and other STIs during a pap smear

Treating HPV

For many cases HPV goes away on its own (2 years on average) and does not cause any health problems. There is no treatment for HPV itself; however, there are treatments for the health issues it can cause:

- Genital warts can be treated with prescription topical medications (gels or creams), by medically freezing, or by cauterization (burning or freezing of the tissue)
- Pre-cancer is treated by taking out the cells that are not normal. Usually, a short procedure in a healthcare provider's office or health center.
- If cancer stage is reached, then medical procedures will be attempted: surgery, radiation, chemotherapy

Pregnancy and HPV

While HPV (Human Papillomavirus) is common and usually doesn't cause issues during pregnancy, it can be passed from mother to child and in rare cases can lead to complications

This FACT SHEET is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or call the Lenawee County Health Department (517) 264-5226