

# Human Papillomavirus and Health

## What is HPV?



The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a term that is commonly used to refer to about 40 different types of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). While some types of the virus have no signs or symptoms and often go away on their own, several other strains can cause serious health issues for both men and women, including genital & oral warts, cervical cancer, genital cancers, oral cancers, and even a rare respiratory illness. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that:

- 360,000 people get genital warts each year
- 27,000 people develop HPV-related cancer each year

## How does a person get HPV?

HPV can be passed by any genital contact. This means that engaging in any kind of sexual activity, regardless of the sex of their partner, is at risk for contracting HPV. Even those with only one sexual partner are still at risk. According to the CDC, the HPV virus is so common that almost 79 million Americans are currently infected and they estimate an additional 14 million people will become infected each year. Fortunately, several studies show that 91% of new infections will resolve themselves within two years.



## How is HPV prevented?

The only way to completely prevent the sharing of STIs is to abstain from any sexual contact. Research suggests that for those who are planning on engaging in sexual activity, both the male and female condom can significantly reduce the risk of sharing HPV. There are vaccines available which protect against the most common types of HPV. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that both girls and boys between the ages of 11 and 12 be immunized. Also, men and women, up to the age of 26 may be immunized as well. For more information about the HPV vaccine, talk with your healthcare provider or call 314.362.WELL for a referral to a provider in your area.



American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Infectious Disease. (2012). HPV vaccine. *Pediatrics*, 129, 602-605.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (2013). *STD Facts: Genital HPV infection-fact sheet*.

Retrieved from website: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm>