



planned
parenthood
TORONTO

**YOUR
HEALTH.
YOUR
CHOICE.**

HPV

Talk to your partner(s) about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and your health before you have sex. You can pass on an STI without knowing you have it. During sex, you can use latex condoms to lower your chances of getting STIs.

What is HPV?

HPV is short for a virus that is called Human Papilloma Virus. It is the virus that causes warts. There are many different types of HPV. Some HPV types are sexually transmitted and cause genital warts. Genital warts may grow on your penis, anus, or inside or outside of the vagina. Some HPV types can cause changes to a woman's cervix and have the potential to cause cervical or anal cancer. The cervix is the opening to the uterus.

How do you get HPV?

You can get HPV if you have oral sex, vaginal sex, or anal sex with a person who already has the virus or come into direct contact with the warts or the infected area. Your partner may not have visible warts but can still spread the virus. A pregnant woman may also pass the virus to her child during delivery.

How can you tell if you have HPV?

Many people won't have any symptoms, but can still pass the virus on to their sexual partners. If you are infected, you may find warts near the infected area. They may look like small, flesh-coloured hard spots, or like cauliflower. Some warts are very hard to see. You may also experience itching, pain when having vaginal or anal sex, vaginal or rectal bleeding.

How do you get tested for HPV?

There is no special test for HPV. A clinician can tell if you have genital warts by looking at them.

Some types of HPV can cause changes to a woman's cervix. If these changes aren't treated, they may lead to cancer of the cervix. A clinician can do a simple test called a PAP test to check your cervix. They will gently take some cells from your cervix. If you are having sex, it is important to have a PAP test once a year. If you have HPV, you might need PAP tests more often.

It is important to use condoms or a latex barrier with sexual partners to decrease the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

How is HPV treated?

Right now, there is no cure for HPV. There are many different strains of HPV. Some are chronic, meaning that it stays in your body. Others are not chronic and may disappear over time. If your PAP test shows that HPV has caused changes to your cervix, you may be sent to a special doctor for treatment. There are many different methods a clinician can use to take the warts off:

- * They can freeze the warts with liquid nitrogen.
- * They can laser the warts.
- * They can remove the warts surgically.
- * They can prescribe a special cream that you can apply at home for up to 16 weeks.

Many of these treatments require repeat visits to your clinic. You may experience itching, redness, irritation, discomfort and a burning sensation where the treatment is applied.

How do you prevent spreading the virus to your partner?

There is still no cure for HPV, so it is possible that you may always have this virus in your body. Even after you have been treated for warts, you could pass HPV on to the people you have sex with. That's why it's important to talk to your partner(s) before you start having vaginal or anal intercourse. It might be hard to talk about HPV, but it is important that both you and your partner(s) know the risks. Latex condoms can lower your chances of passing on HPV.

If you need further information or would like to book an appointment, call:

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services for youth ages 13 to 29. 416-927-7171. Health Services offers same-day, scheduled and drop-in appointments. For more information visit www.ppt.on.ca.

Women's Programming at the Bay Centre for Birth Control for women of all ages at 416-351-3700.

Youth can also access information about sexual health by calling the Teen Sex InfoLine at 416-961-3200 or chat live using MSN messenger at spiderbytes@hotmail.com from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Wednesday and 12 noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. You can also email us a question anytime at askus@spiderbytes.ca or visit www.spiderbytes.ca.