

Can I protect myself from getting HPV?

A vaccine is available to protect men and women from getting the most serious strains of HPV. The vaccines are recommended for 11-26 year olds.

- For women: the vaccine is recommended for 11 or 12 year-old girls but can also be given to women through age 26 who did not get any or all of the doses when they were younger.
- For men: The vaccine is recommended for boys aged 11 or 12 years but can also be given to men through age 21 who did not get any or all doses when they were younger. The vaccine is also recommended for men through the age of 26 who have sex with men or have a compromised immune system.

It is recommended that 11-14 year olds receive 2 doses of HPV vaccine given at least 6 months apart. However, if adolescents 14 years or younger have received 2 doses of HPV vaccine less than 5 months apart, they will need to get a third dose. For teens and young adults who start the series later at ages 15-26, they will need 3 doses of HPV vaccine. Three doses are also recommended for people with weakened immune systems ages 11-26 years.

Can I do more to protect myself from getting HPV?

The only 100% effective way to prevent HPV is to not have sex. Talk to your health care provider about getting the HPV vaccine if you are between the ages of 11-26 to protect yourself.

Limit your risk of getting HPV or another STI by taking the following steps:

- Always use a latex or polyurethane condom or barrier (dental dam) when having anal, vaginal and/or oral sex
 - Condoms made from “natural” materials may protect against pregnancy but NOT STIs
- Reduce your number of partners if you choose to have sex
- Talk with your partner about their STI status and getting tested
- Talk with your health care provider about safer sexual practices and getting tested
- Understand that having sex while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol can increase the likelihood of unprotected sex

You **cannot** get HPV from:

- Hugging
- Shaking hands
- Sharing food or using the same dish

For more information, visit:

<http://www.bphc.org/whatwedo/sexual-health>
or <http://www.cdc.gov/std>

HPV



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What is HPV?

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) caused by a virus. There are more than 40 types of HPV viruses that can infect the genitals of men and women. HPV infection can cause many problems, including cervical cancer.

How does HPV spread?

HPV is spread when someone has vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who is infected. HPV can be passed from an infected person even if they do not have symptoms. It is also possible to get more than one type of HPV. HPV can also be passed from mother to child during birth, but this is very rare.

Who can get HPV?

Anyone who is sexually active can get HPV. Having unprotected sex (sex without a condom) increases the chance of getting HPV. HPV is so common that nearly all sexually active men and women get it at some point in their lives.



What are the symptoms of HPV?

Many people with HPV do not have symptoms. For those who do have symptoms, the most common ones are:

- **Genital warts:**
 - A small bump or groups of bumps
 - With some strains of HPV, warts can show up within weeks or months after sexual contact with an infected partner

HPV infection can cause cancer including:

- **Cervical cancer**
- Does not have symptoms until the cancer is advanced. Best way to know if you are at risk is to get regular Pap tests
- **Other HPV-related cancers:**
 - Include cancer of the vagina, penis, anus, or throat

Long term HPV infections can also cause:

- **Recurrent Respiratory Papillomatosis (RRP)**
 - Can block the airway or make it hard to breathe
 - Can affect the vocal cords

Can HPV be treated?

HPV cannot be cured. However, people can be treated for the diseases that HPV can cause such as genital warts, cervical cancer, other HPV-related cancers, or RRP.

How long can an infected person spread HPV?

Once a person is infected with HPV, he or she can continue to spread HPV to others during sexual contact. It is important to know that a person can spread HPV to others even if they do not have symptoms.

How can I find out if I have HPV?

Regular Pap tests are advised for all women. Check with your health care provider to find out how frequently you need to be tested.

Men and women who get symptoms of possible HPV infection such as genital warts should see a health care provider.

Where can I get tested?

Most health care providers offer testing for HPV and other STIs. Contact your health care provider to be tested. If you need a health care provider, call the Mayor's Health Line at **617-534-5050**.