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CDC-INFO Contact Center
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If you have been diagnosed with any sexually transmitted disease (STD), your sexual partner(s) should be tested for HIV and other STDs, even if they have no symptoms. If you have been diagnosed with any STD, including HIV, you should have a blood test in three months to detect blood-borne infections you might have contracted at the time you tested positive for any STD.

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HPV

Facts & Info

What is HPV?

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD). HPV infection can lead to genital warts or cancer.



What is HPV?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) and is a group of more than 200 related viruses, each of which is given a number called a HPV type. Some HPV types can cause genital warts. Other HPV types can lead to cancers such as: cervical, anal, vaginal, vulvar, penile, and oral (throat, tongue, or tonsil) cancer.

How do you get HPV?

HPV can be passed through skin to skin contact. You can get HPV by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus, even if you have had sex with only one person.

How is HPV diagnosed?

In most cases, HPV goes away on its own, but when it does not, it can cause genital warts or cancer. The HPV types that can cause genital warts are not the same types that can cause cancer. Because it's often difficult to detect HPV, your doctor may look at the genital area or perform a HPV test (or Pap Test in the vagina).

How is HPV treated?

There is no cure for HPV and the warts linked to the virus.

Your doctor can give you medication or remove the warts surgically. You should see your doctor for a Pap Test, which detects abnormal cells in the cervix, so the correct treatment can be decided.

What are the symptoms of HPV?

Genital warts usually cause no symptoms; however HPV may cause the following symptoms:

- Burning discomfort;
- Painful sex;
- Itching;
- Bleeding during sex, urination, or bowel movements;
- An unusual discharge from the vagina;
- Pain in the pelvic region.

During pregnancy, warts may increase in size, blocking the birth canal and increasing the chance the mother may need a C-section.

Symptoms of oropharyngeal cancer may include a long-lasting sore throat, earaches, hoarseness, swollen lymph nodes, pain when swallowing, and unexplained weight loss.

Some people have no symptoms.

Can HPV be prevented?

Abstinence (not having oral, anal, or vaginal sex) is the only 100% method of not getting the virus.

Condoms may lower the risk of getting HPV if used the right way every time you have sex. Areas not covered by the condom can contain the virus, so condoms do not provide total protection from the virus.

Individuals can get a vaccine to protect them from the HPV types that most commonly cause genital warts and cancer. This vaccine is best received before ever having sex and between 9-26 years of age.

Talk to your health care provider for more information about the HPV vaccine.

When will the symptoms appear?

Symptoms for genital warts can take 3 weeks to months to appear, while it may take months or years for abnormal cell growth and cancer to occur. A Pap Test can detect abnormal cells on the cervix in the vagina.