

Fact Sheet

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is a common virus that can cause cancer in the cervix, genitals, head and neck.

How is HPV Spread?

HPV is commonly spread through direct skin to skin contact during intimate sexual activity with an infected partner.

What are the signs and symptoms of HPV infection?

Most people with HPV do not develop symptoms. In many cases HPV will clear within two years. When the HPV infections do not clear they can cause cancer and genital warts.

Cervical cancer usually does not have symptoms until the cancer is advanced. Regular pap smears will help to find early signs of disease and allow for early treatment.

Other HPV related cancers usually do not have signs and symptoms until they are advanced. These include cancers of the vulva, vagina, penis, anus and throat.

Genital warts are most common and can appear within weeks or months after sexual contact with an infected partner. The warts will look like small bumps or a group of bumps in the genital area. The warts will be small or large, raised or flat. There is usually no pain but the warts can cause itchiness.

How do people get HPV?

HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections. Not everyone with HPV will show symptoms and they may not know they have an HPV infection.

HPV is spread by skin-to-skin contact with someone who is infected. HPV can be passed on even when no symptoms are present.

Can HPV be treated?

There is no cure for HPV infection. Diseases caused by HPV can be treated. Treatment should always be discussed with your health care provider.

How can people prevent HPV?

The Government of Nunavut has a publicly funded HPV school-based immunization program for all eligible Nunavummiut. People not eligible for this program can speak to a health care provider to obtain more information.

Using condoms may lower the risk of getting HPV infection or passing it to their partners. A condom will only protect the covered area; contact with an uncovered wart could cause an infection.

Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your Community Health Centre or Public Health.
<http://www.hpvinfos.ca>