

ANSWERS TO THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED HPV QUESTIONS

1. **How, when, or from whom did I get HPV?**
 - Genital HPV is a sexually transmitted virus.
 - It is usually impossible to know from whom or when one acquired HPV because most people don't know they have it.
 - HPV is probably the most common sexually transmitted infection, affecting at least 75% of sexually active Americans.
2. **Will HPV affect a pregnancy or a baby?**
 - Regular Pap tests provide early diagnosis; early diagnosis allows your doctor to use cervical treatments that can preserve fertility.
 - During pregnancy, warts and lesions may grow faster.
 - Warts may have to be removed if they are bleeding or obstructing the birth canal.
 - HPV is rarely passed on from mother to child; in rare instances, HPV types 6 and 11 can cause wartlike growths in the throat; this condition is called juvenile-onset recurrent respiratory papillomatosis.
3. **Can a person get or give HPV through oral sex or from hands?**
 - Although HPV could potentially be transmitted this way, it does not happen very often.
 - Recent studies indicate a relationship between HPV and some head and neck cancers, but the route of acquisition is not clear.
4. **How can I get tested for HPV?**
 - Warts are diagnosed by a clinical visual inspection.
 - In women, HPV-related cervical lesions (Dysplasia) can be detected by Pap smears.
 - Women with mildly abnormal or uncertain Pap smears may undergo HPV testing or repeat Pap screening.
 - There is no FDA-approved screening test for detecting HPV in men.
5. **Will I always have HPV?**
 - A healthy immune system usually suppresses the virus.
 - It is difficult to predict when HPV is no longer contagious.
 - Experts disagree on whether the virus is eliminated from the body or is reduced to undetectable levels.
6. **How can I prevent giving or getting HPV?**
 - Lifetime mutual monogamy or abstinence are the best possibilities for prevention.
 - Most sexually active people will get HPV.
 - Condoms prevent many bacterial and viral infections, but if HPV is present on uncovered skin, transmission is possible.
7. **Can partners reinfect each other?**
 - Reinfection with the same type of HPV is unlikely.
 - Partners are likely to share the same HPV type.
 - Few studies have been conducted regarding reinfection or the effects of treatment on infectivity.
8. **Does HPV cause cervical cancer?**
 - HPV causes cervical cancer, but regular Pap tests and appropriate follow-up treatment prevent most women from getting cervical cancer.
 - Other factors (immune system, other STIs, smoking, genetics, number of partners, hormonal contraceptive use) might increase the risk of cancer.
9. **What should I tell my partner about HPV?**
 - Most sexually active people will get HPV.
 - For most, HPV is only temporary.
 - The majority of people do not develop symptoms so they do not know they are infected.
 - Understanding the psychological, social, and physical impact of HPV will help put the virus in perspective.
10. **What are the best treatment options for HPV?**
 - The human papillomavirus itself is never treated; however, lesions (warts) induced by HPV can be treated.
 - Although in some cases, warts go away by themselves within a few months. If warts are bothersome and patients choose to treat them, providers can do so by freezing, burning, or cutting off the warts, or by prescribing creams that are self-applied.
 - Providers usually do not treat minor Pap smear abnormalities because most minor abnormalities will go away on their own.
 - The most common treatments for HPV-induced cervical lesions are cryotherapy (freezing of abnormal cells) or LEEP (the excision of the abnormal cells).
 - Patients should discuss all treatment options with their provider before deciding on one treatment.

Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics
Source: Adapted from ASHA, ref 30.
HPV=human papillomavirus; LEEP=loop electrosurgical excision procedure; STI=sexually transmitted infection

For More Information:

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National STD and AIDS Hotlines**
800-227-8922 or 800-342-2437
In Spanish: 800-344-7432
TTY for Deaf and Hard of Hearing: 800-243-7889
www.ashastd.org/NSTD/index.html

**National HPV and Cervical Cancer
Prevention Hotline**
919-361-4848
www.ashastd.org/hpvccrc/

Medical Plaza at Rex
4414 Lake Boone Trail, Suite 205, Raleigh, NC 27607
919-788-4444 phone ~ 919-788-4464 fax
www.centreobgyn.com