



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

HPV and Genital Warts

What is HPV?

It is human papillomavirus, a family of 60 viruses. Some cause warts on the hands and feet while others cause genital (private parts) warts. Others, cause changes in the cells of the cervix and penis which may become cancerous.

How do you get HPV?

HPV is spread by sexual intercourse or by touching the private parts of someone who has the virus. It can be spread even if the person does not have visible warts.

How do I tell I have HPV?

Your care provider may see skin colored bumps or the virus may be identified on your PAP smear. A vinegar solution may be brushed on the wart and your care provider will look at it under a big magnifying glass to identify it.

How do you treat HPV?

Treatment of warts consists of several options. Topical application of:

- Podophyllin- a chemical is put on outside of warts
- Trichloroacetic acid- an acid that is put on the wart
- Cryotherapy- liquid nitrogen burns off the wart
- Laser therapy- burns off the wart
- Aldara- cream that is applied at home for 10-16 weeks

Each treatment has its benefits, but they are not 100% in curing HPV. Your sexual partner should be treated also to keep from spreading the virus.

If no warts are present, treatment is to watch changes in the cervix. PAP smears are done at set times to catch any precancerous changes.

What about if I'm pregnant?

The warts may grow or bleed during pregnancy. Unless they block the birth canal, they should not be a problem. Having warts is not a reason for a cesarean.

Does HPV cause cancer?

Those women with HPV get cancer more often than those who don't have the virus. A PAP smear yearly is usually done to watch for this.

How can I protect myself?

The use of condoms may help keep the virus from coming in contact with your or someone else's skin. The virus can be in areas not covered by the condom.

If you think you might have this, please call 464-5210 for an appointment.