

birth canal. This is because it is rare for a baby to be affected by a mother's warts.

### How can you avoid getting HPV?

Latex condoms used the right way from start to finish each time you have sex, may provide protection, but only for the area of the skin that they cover. Keep in mind a new partner may have HPV from a previous relationship and not know. In a new relationship, you and your partner might want to first discuss your sexual health with a healthcare provider.

Spermicidal foams, jellies and creams are not proven to work against HPV and genital warts, and some research indicates these products may irritate sensitive genital skin (especially with women), perhaps making it easier to contract sexually transmitted infections (STIs). For this reason, use of spermicides is not recommended.

### What about HPV vaccines?

Gardasil - 9 is available for both males and females, is more than 90% effective at preventing HPV related infections which can lead to cervical cancer, anal, vulvar and vaginal cancers and genital warts. Each year about 4,000 women die of cervical cancer.

The vaccine is given at 11 or 12 years of age but may be given through age 45. The vaccine is given in a series of three shots over six months for those over age 15 or only two doses for those under age 15. Women who get the vaccine must still get regular Pap tests.

### Is it normal to feel emotional or upset about having HPV?

Yes! Some people feel very upset. If you are worried about HPV remember:

- Symptoms of genital warts can be managed.
- Cervical cancer, the most serious problem associated with some types of genital HPV, is easily prevented through Pap tests (and HPV tests when appropriate)
- You are not alone! It is estimated that millions of Americans have HPV. For those who do experience symptoms, it tends to be a minor problem that can be resolved.

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Since 1914, the **American Sexual Health Association (ASHA)** has been dedicated to improving the health of individuals, families, and communities, with an emphasis on sexual health and a focus on preventing sexually transmitted diseases and their harmful consequences.

ASHA offers a wide range of patient education materials, including **books, brochures, fact sheets, and more.** To see all our available materials, please visit our online store at [www.ashapublications.org](http://www.ashapublications.org) or call ASHA Customer Service at **800-783-9877.**

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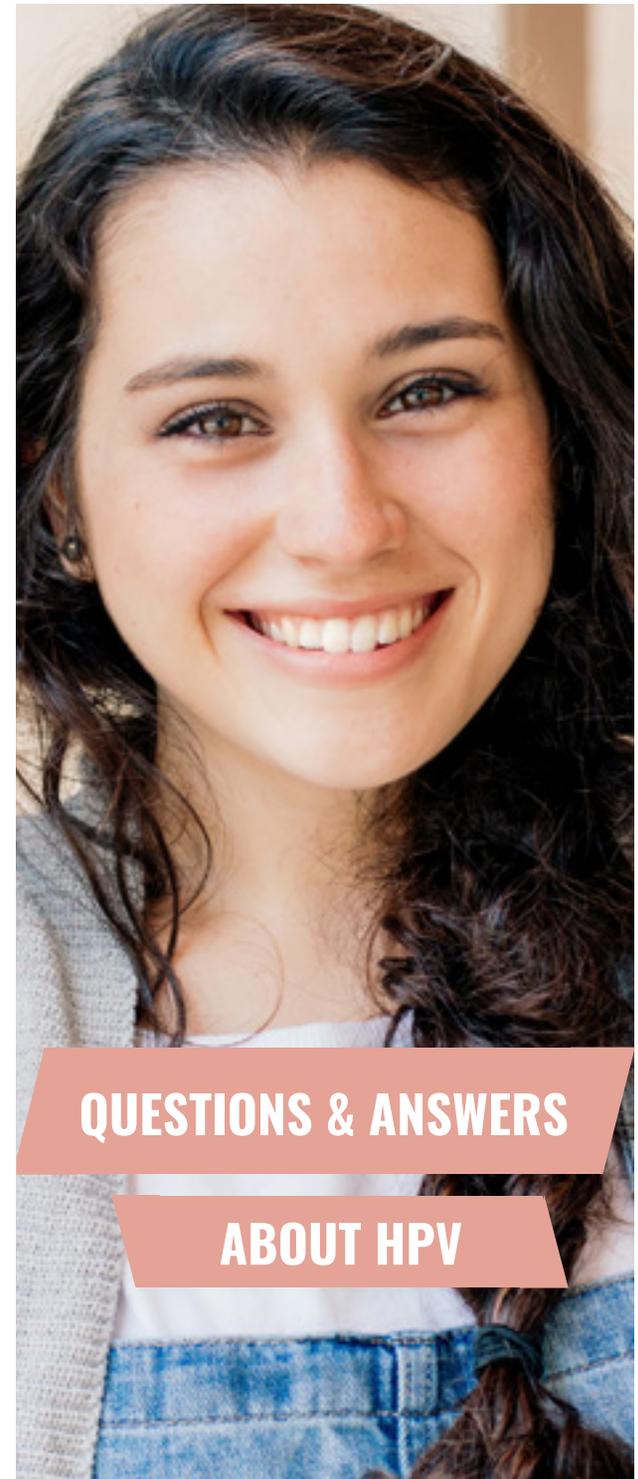
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**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

**ABOUT HPV**

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active men and women of all ages, races, social classes and sexual orientation.

### How do you get HPV or genital warts?

HPV is spread by direct, skin-to-skin contact during vaginal, anal or (possibly) oral sex with someone who has an infection. Warts on other parts of the body, such as the hands, are caused by different types of HPV. People do not get genital warts by coming in contact with warts on the hands or the feet.

### What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the name of a group of viruses that infect the skin. There are over 100 different types of HPV. Some types of HPV can cause genital warts and other types can cause cancer, especially cervical cancer. These types of HPV are sexually transmitted.

The “high-risk” HPV types that cause cell changes to the cervix can, if not found, increase a woman’s chance of developing cervical cancer. The “low-risk” types that cause genital warts are almost never found with cervical cancers. HPV can also cause cancer of the vulva, vagina, penis or anus. It can also cause cancer in the back of the throat. But most HPV infections do not cause symptoms that are noticeable. Most people never know they have the virus.

### How common is HPV?

Currently there are more than 79 million with HPV and 14 million will get it each year. About 360,000 will get genital warts and about 17,600 women and 9,300 men will get cancer.

### What do genital warts look like?

Genital warts are growths or bumps that appear on the vulva, in or around the vagina or anus, on the cervix, or on the penis, scrotum or groin. They may be raised or flat, single or multiple, small or large.

### Who gets HPV or genital warts?

HPV infection, including genital warts, affects sexually

### How long do you have HPV before it is diagnosed?

Warts may appear within several weeks after sex with a person who has HPV, or they may take months or years to appear, or they may never appear. It might take weeks, months, or even years after exposure to HPV before cervical cell changes are detected. This makes it hard to know exactly when you got the virus, or from whom.

### How are genital warts diagnosed?

Warts can be small and very hard to see, even during a medical exam. Also, sometimes it’s hard to tell the difference between a wart and normal bumps or pimples. If you think you have warts, or have been exposed to HPV, go to a healthcare provider. A healthcare provider will check you more closely and may use a magnifying lens to find small warts.

### How are cervical cell changes detected?

A Pap test is used to find abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix. Precancerous cervical changes are caused by HPV. Women with abnormal Pap results should either be followed closely with regular screening, or examined for further cervical problems. This may involve a colposcopy, where the healthcare provider uses a special microscope (a colposcope) to closely inspect the cervix.

For women age 30 and over an HPV test may be used along with a Pap. HPV tests can find any of the high-risk types of HPV that are commonly found in cervical

cancer. One HPV test has recently been approved for use as primary cervical cancer screening for women age 25 and older, followed by a Pap test for women with certain results. A healthcare provider can help explain which test is right for you.

### How are genital warts treated?

There are several treatments for genital warts. The goal of any treatment should be to remove visible genital warts to get rid of symptoms. No one treatment is best for all cases.

When choosing what treatment to use, your healthcare provider will consider the size, location and number of warts; changes in the warts; patient preference; cost of treatment; convenience; adverse effects; and their own experience with the treatments. Treatment will take only one session for some, while others may have to return.

### How are cervical cell changes treated?

Most cases of mild cervical cell changes are not dangerous and go away on their own. Many healthcare providers opt to take care of women with a “watch and wait” approach of frequent follow up exams rather than treatment.

When treatment is needed, options include cryosurgery (freezing abnormal tissue), laser (a powerful beam of light to cut or destroy tissue), LEEP (also known as LOOP or LLETZ), using a thin, electrically charged wire to cut away abnormal cells), and cone biopsy (removing a cone-shaped piece of tissue with a surgical knife, laser, or LOOP). Ask your healthcare provider to tell you about the treatment chosen for you.

### Can HPV be cured?

None of the treatments listed above is a cure for HPV. The virus can remain within skin cells even after treatment. Because the virus can lie dormant in cells, warts can return after treatment. However, once clear for several months, most people with genital warts never have any come back. Some experts believe this may be because a person’s own immune system helps to either suppress, or possibly clear, the virus.

### What about HPV and pregnancy?

A pregnant woman should notify her healthcare provider if she or her partner(s) has had HPV or genital warts. Keep in mind, though, that most women with genital warts deliver naturally and have healthy babies. A woman with genital warts does not need to have a Cesarean section unless warts are blocking the