

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and Genital Warts

What is HPV?

- It is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the world.
- There are more than 100 types of HPV; more than 30 types are sexually transmitted.
- It is estimated that about 75% of sexually active Canadians will have at least one HPV infection during their lifetime.

What are genital warts?

- Genital warts are the most easily recognized sign of genital HPV infection (see signs and symptoms).

How is HPV spread?

- It is very contagious.
- It is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact, which may occur during close sexual contact (not limited to vaginal, anal or oral sex) with someone who has the virus.
- Some people may have no signs of infection and still pass the virus on to others.
- About two-thirds of people who have sexual contact with a partner with genital warts will develop warts, usually within 3 months.
- HPV can also infect the mouth and throat of men and women.

How can genital warts/HPV infection be diagnosed?

- Health professionals can diagnose warts using your medical history and a physical examination.
- HPV infection can be identified through a Pap smear (a screening test for abnormal cells of the cervix).
- Sexually active females should have regular Pap tests.
- Currently, there is no test to find HPV infection in men.

What will decrease or eliminate the risk of getting HPV?

- Limit the number of sexual partners you have.
- Use a condom during sex or a dental dam during oral sex. This will help to protect you and your partner against HPV and other STIs.
- Avoid sexual contact if you or your partner have symptoms or are being treated for an STI.
- Get vaccinated against HPV. The HPV vaccine is almost 100% effective against the HPV types in the vaccine. For more information on the vaccine, refer to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health's fact sheet on Human Papillomavirus Vaccine:
<http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/hpv>

What are the signs and symptoms of genital warts?

- Most people infected with HPV don't have symptoms.
- In others, symptoms are often so mild they don't know they are infected and may still pass the virus on to others.
- Genital warts are usually flesh-colored or white. They can be different sizes and shapes.
- They may look like a raised small cauliflower or may be flat.
- Like other kinds of warts, they may appear individually or in a cluster.
- In males, they can be found on the scrotum, penis or around the anus.
- In females, they may be on the vulva or around the vagina or anus or they may be hidden inside the vagina or on the cervix.
- Genital warts may cause pain, itching and bleeding.

How are genital warts treated?

- Treatment may not be needed; about 80% of infections clear on their own.
- Your physician can treat genital warts; the warts can be frozen, burned or treated with a laser or removed in surgery.
- Genital warts should not be treated with non-prescription wart removal products.
- Treatments can get rid of the warts but they don't get rid of the virus. Because the virus is still in your body, the warts can come back.

What are the long-term complications of HPV infection?

- Some types of HPV can cause cancer of the cervix in females.
- Other types are associated with cancers such as vulvar, anal, oral or cancer of the penis. It can also cause cancer of the head and neck.
- Genital warts can cause problems during pregnancy because they may increase in size, bleed or become infected. Rarely, a baby born to a woman with genital warts may develop warts in their throat.

Who is at risk of getting HPV?

- People who have or whose partner has had more than one sexual partner.
- People who do not use condoms every time they have sex or genital contact.
- People with a weakened immune system that make it hard for the body to fight infections.

For more information contact:

**Your family doctor,
local public health office,
HealthLine at 811
OR the following
Sexual Health Clinics:**

Sexual Health Clinic

100 – 310 Idylwyld Drive North
SASKATOON SK S7L 0Z2

Speak with a nurse at 306-655-4642

Visit the website for clinic details:

http://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/your_health/ps_public_health_sexual_health.htm

Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic

2110 Hamilton Street

REGINA SK S4P 2E3

Phone: 306-766-7788

Sexual Health Clinic

2nd Floor, MacIntosh Mall

800 Central Avenue

PRINCE ALBERT SK S6V 6G1

Phone: 306-765-6540

Battlefords Sexual Health Clinic

Rm. 104, 1192 – 101 Street

NORTH BATTLEFORD SK S9A 0Z6

Phone: 306-937-6846

Reference: Human Papillomavirus and Genital Warts, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health; HPV and Men Fact sheet, CDC (2010); Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections, Public Health Agency of Canada (2008); Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (10th ed., 2007); Red Book (2009); www.sexualityandu.ca