

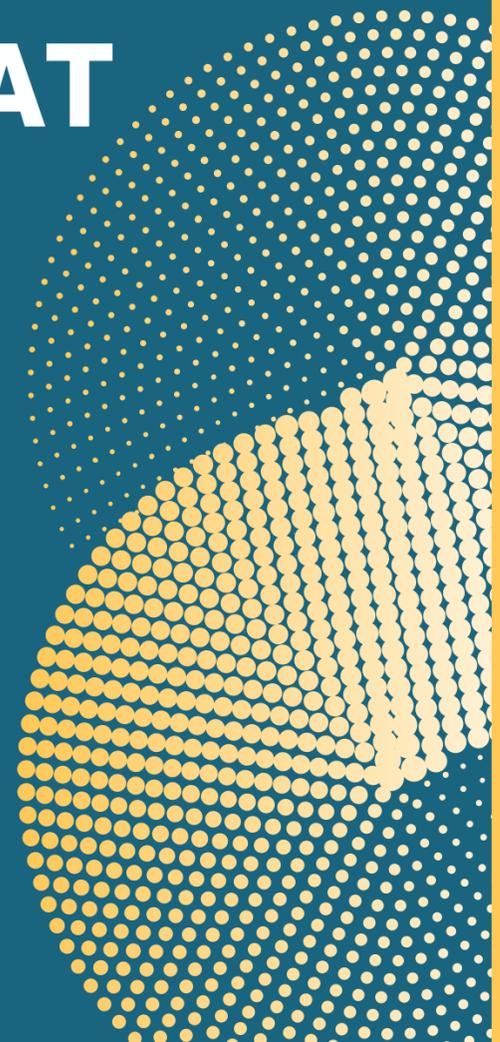


TRANSMISSION AND PREVENTION

HPV



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This patient resource was adapted by the Society of Canadian Colposcopists (SCC) with the permission of the B.C. Colposcopy Program.

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HOW DO PEOPLE GET HPV?

HPV is highly contagious. It is passed from one person to another during sexual contact that includes: skin to- skin contact, vaginal, anal, and oral sex.



INFECTION

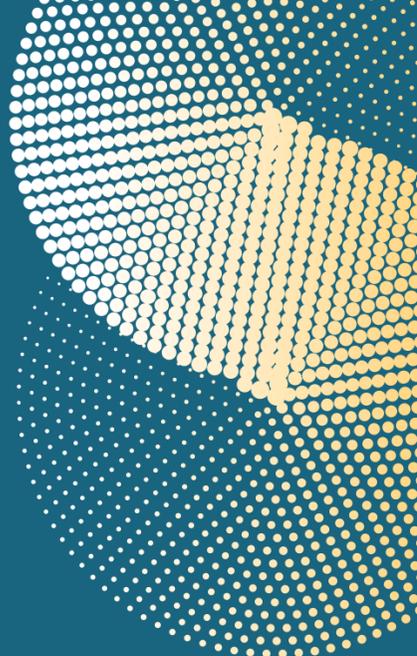
How common is HPV infection?

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). It is estimated that three out of four sexually active Canadians will become infected with HPV at least once in their lifetime.

Do condoms protect against HPV?

Condoms will reduce your chance of getting HPV and other STIs. You can still get HPV from infected skin that is not covered by a condom.





MY PARTNER AND I ARE MONOGAMOUS. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY OTHER PARTNERS. HOW DID I GET INFECTED WITH HPV?

Getting an HPV infection does not mean that you or your partner has recently been with other partners. You or your partner may have been infected in the past. The virus may remain in a person's body for years.

SHOULD I TELL MY PARTNER THAT I HAVE HPV?

Telling your partner your HPV status is a personal decision. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection. Most sexually active people have been exposed to HPV. If your partner is male, serious health problems in men are rare. The more that you know about HPV, the more comfortable you will be at discussing the topic with your partner. Talk to your health care provider for more information.



Why can't my body protect me from HPV?

Your body's immune system will usually get rid of an HPV infection without treatment. This normally takes between 1-2 years. Sometimes the immune system cannot get rid of the virus and the infection will remain in your body. Your body can develop some protection against HPV if you get rid of the infection. Even if you get rid of HPV, protection is not guaranteed. There is a chance you can be infected with the same, or other HPV types. After clearing an HPV strain, the body does not develop long term immunity to that strain of HPV.



Should I worry about HPV infection?

Although the risk is low, HPV infection can lead to the development of pre-cancerous changes in affected cells. This can then lead to an increased risk of cancer. HPV infection can also cause genital warts.

How can I protect myself from HPV?

- **Know your sexual partners.** The more sexual partners you have, the more at risk you are for getting HPV.
- **Get vaccinated for the HPV virus.** HPV vaccines are highly effective at preventing HPV infections and the pre-cancerous changes that can happen due to HPV. There is evidence that HPV vaccination provides better long term protection than when your body clears an infection on its own. It's never "too late" to be vaccinated.
- **Use condoms.** Condoms reduce the risk of spreading HPV.
- **Quit smoking.** Smoking makes it more difficult for the body to fight an HPV infection. Should I worry about HPV infection?



WILL I GET CERVICAL CANCER IF I HAVE HPV?



Most people who get HPV will not get cancer. However, HPV infection can cause cancer in both women and men. The most common cancer caused by HPV is cervical cancer in women and oropharyngeal cancer (cancer of the mouth and throat) in men. Other cancers caused by HPV include: vulvar cancer (cancer involving the skin outside of the opening to the vagina), anal cancer, and penile cancer



HOW CAN I AVOID GETTING CERVICAL CANCER?

Get screened. Screening saves lives. Screening tests such as a Pap test are free and can be arranged by your health care provider. These tests look for early changes in the cervix that can be treated so that you don't develop cancer. Most patients diagnosed with cervical cancer did not get regular screening tests.

Get vaccinated. Prevent the HPV infections that can cause cancer. HPV vaccination is covered by many extended health plans for women up to 45 years old.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

HealthLinkBC



THE SOCIETY OF OBSTETRICIANS
AND GYNAECOLOGISTS OF CANADA
LA SOCIÉTÉ DES OBSTÉTRICIENS
ET GYNÉCOLOGUES DU CANADA



precare



BC Centre for Disease Control

**TO SEE ALL THE
PATIENT
RESOURCES IN
THIS SERIES.**



SCAN ME