



HPV and Genital Warts Factsheet

What is HPV?

The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is a common sexually transmitted infection. There are many types of HPV, some strains have been linked to causing cases of cancer.

HPV can be transmitted by body to body contact and exchange of fluids through vaginal, penile, oral, or anal sexual contact and intercourse.

What are the symptoms (if any)?

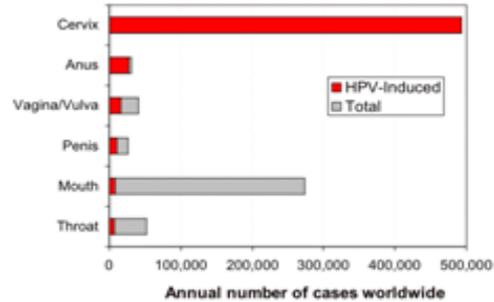
It is often difficult to tell whether you have HPV because many types of the virus cause no symptoms. Some types of HPV cause genital warts, which may look like small pink spots, raised bumps or cauliflower shaped warts. In men, these warts tend to form on the shaft, head or base of the penis. In women, these warts may form in or around the vagina or the labia (“lips”).

How is it treated?

If you test positive for HPV, a pap smear test will automatically be conducted to detect if there are any cell abnormalities. This is in line with government guidelines on cervical screening in the UK. If you provided a vaginal swab, you may be asked to provide another sample. A liquid cytology sample can be tested for both HPV and cervical cell abnormalities.

If you have a Low Risk HPV viral type, you may find that your body can get rid of the virus naturally over time. Genital warts can be treated. If you have visible warts, then these can typically be removed with lasers, creams, surgery or freezing (cryotherapy).

You should abstain from sexual intercourse until your treatment is finished.



Graph to show proportion of HPV-Induced Cancer

What happens if you do not get further advice?

Persistent HPV infections are now recognised as the major cause of cervical cancer, and may play a role in some cancers of the anus, vulva, vagina, penis, mouth and throat.

If genital warts become large enough, they can become an obstacle to intercourse and in women, even delivery, thereby requiring a caesarean section, although this is rare. In some instances, warts are passed from mother to child during childbirth, leading to a potentially life-threatening condition for newborns in which warts develop in the throat (laryngeal papillomatosis).

Better2Know Testing Information

Better2Know recommends testing for HPV by providing a liquid cytology sample. This enables a reflex pap smear to be conducted should you test positive for HPV. Otherwise, another sample will be needed for further testing.

For men, the standard HPV test is a swab of a visible wart or lesion; your Better2Know doctor will determine the appropriate site (visible wart, urethra, or anus) for sampling.