



Genital human papillomavirus (HPV) is a sexually transmitted virus. There are more than 30 types of genital HPV that can infect the genital area of men, including the skin on and around the penis or anus.

What are the signs and symptoms of HPV in men?

Most men who get genital HPV do not have any symptoms. However, some types of HPV can cause genital warts. Genital warts are single or multiple growths that appear in the genital area. They may be raised, flat, or cauliflower shaped.

In men, genital warts may appear around the anus or on the penis, scrotum (testicles), groin or thighs. Even men who have never had anal sex can get warts around the anus. Warts may appear within weeks or months after sexual contact with an infected person, or not at all. A person can have the type of HPV that causes genital warts, but never develop any warts.

How do men get Genital HPV?

Genital HPV is passed on through genital contact –such as vaginal and anal sex. Both men and women can get HPV – and pass it on - without even realizing it. Genital warts can also be passed on by a person who has HPV but no visible warts. Since the virus can be “silent” for a long time, people can have genital HPV even if years have passed since they have had sex.

What is the connection between HPV and penile and anal cancers?

Certain types of HPV have been linked to cancer of the anus and penis in men. These cancers are rare –especially in men with healthy immune systems. The types of HPV that can cause genital warts are not the same as the types that can cause penile or anal cancer.

How common is HPV and associated conditions in men?

Over half of sexually active men in the United States (U.S.) will have HPV at some time in their lives.

- About 1% of sexually active men in the U.S. have genital warts at any one time.
- The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates that about 1,530 men will be diagnosed with penile cancer in the U.S. in 2006. In this country, penile cancer accounts for about 0.2% of all cancers in men. It is especially rare in circumcised men.
- ACS estimates that about 1,910 men will be diagnosed with anal cancer in 2006. The risk for anal cancer is 17 times higher among gay and bisexual men than among heterosexual men. The risk is also higher among men with compromised immune systems, including those with HIV.

Is there a test for HPV in men?

At the moment, there is no test approved to detect HPV in men. However, there are ways to detect the most common problem caused by HPV in men, genital warts. Genital warts are usually diagnosed by visual inspection. Some health care providers may use a vinegar solution to help identify flat warts, although this test is not specific for warts. That means the test may falsely identify normal skin as a wart.

Is there a test to screen for HPV-related cancers in men?

There are currently no tests approved to detect early evidence of HPV-associated cancers in men, as there are for women (Pap tests). Nonetheless, since anal cancer is more common in gay, bisexual, and HIV-positive men, some experts recommend routine anal Pap tests for those populations. The anal Pap test is used to find abnormal cells in the anus (caused by HPV) that could turn into cancer over time. However, it is not yet clear that finding and removing abnormal cells from the anus will effectively prevent anal cancer from developing in the future. CDC does not recommend anal cancer screening.

Is there a treatment or cure for HPV?

There is no treatment or cure for HPV. But there are ways to treat the health conditions associated with HPV in men, including genital warts, penile cancer and anal cancer.

Visible genital warts can be treated with medication, surgically removed, or frozen off. Some of these treatments can be applied by the patient, while others must be performed by a health care provider. No one treatment is best. Warts might return, especially in the first 3 months after treatment.

It is not known whether treatment of genital warts will reduce the chance of passing the virus on to a sex partner. If left untreated, genital warts may go away, remain unchanged, or increase in size or number. They will not turn into cancer. For these reasons, some individuals may choose *not* to get treated, but to see if the warts will disappear on their own.

