

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Program for Grade 8
Females

Toronto Public Health

Adapted from The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada



What is HPV?

- HPV stands for the Human Papillomavirus.
- HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection.
- Chances are you will contract some form of HPV virus in your lifetime and not have any symptoms.

Why Worry About HPV?

- There are over 100 different strains of the HPV virus – most strains are harmless.
- Over 30 strains of the HPV virus are sexually transmitted and affect the genital area.
- Some types are considered “low risk” and can cause warts.
- Other types are considered “high risk” and can lead to cancer of the cervix and other genital areas.

How Do You Get HPV?

- Anyone who has ever had a sexual encounter can contract HPV.
- It is commonly spread by skin-to-skin contact with the genital area of an infected person.

How Do You Know You Have HPV?

- There are no tests to detect the HPV virus. A Pap test can tell if you have precancerous changes on your cervix.
- Most people who get HPV will never know they have it.
- Some low risk types cause genital and anal warts.
- In rare instances, the virus persists and can lead to cancer.

What are Genital Warts?

- Genital warts are cauliflower-like growths.
- Genital and anal warts are very contagious and are spread through sexual activity with an infected partner.

What If You Have Genital Warts?

- Genital warts sometimes disappear without treatment.
- Sometimes genital warts last for years. On average it takes about 8 months to get rid of warts.
- There are treatments that can be done in your doctor's office.
- Genital warts can sometimes come back.

HPV & Cancer

- High risk types of the HPV virus are linked to cervical cancer as well as other genital cancers.
- In women, pre-cancerous cells can be detected on the cervix by a Pap test.
- It is unlikely that a young girl will be diagnosed with cervical cancer as it takes many years for cancer to develop.

What is a Pap Test?

- A Pap test is an examination of a woman's internal genital organs.
- It is the only way to detect abnormal cells on the cervix that could potentially develop into cancer later in life.
- A girl should have her first Pap test within 3 years of becoming sexually active.

How Can You Prevent HPV?

- Have absolutely no skin-to-skin sexual contact.
- Have one sexual partner forever.
- The more sexual partners, the higher the chance of contracting HPV.

Can You Prevent HPV?

- Get vaccinated if you are a female between 9 to 26 years old. The vaccine Gardasil[®] is now available and can prevent infection against four strains of HPV virus – strains 6, 11, 16 and 18.
- Get regular Pap tests to detect abnormal cells on your cervix.

For more information:

www.toronto.ca/health

www.hpvinfosite.ca

Call the Toronto Public Health
Immunization Information Line at 416-
392-1250

The following has been adapted from www.hpvinfosite.ca

