THE CANCER NETWORK

Facts About HPV



HPV spreads through intimate skin-to-skin contact, often during sex. It can cause genital warts or lead to cancer. HIV co-infection greatly increases the cancer risk.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Talk to a healthcare provider about vaccinations and routine HPV-related cancer screenings!

WHY IT MATTERS:

LGBTQIA+ people face unique barriers to HPV prevention and care.

Myth: The vaccine is only for adolescents.
Truth: Adults up through age 45 may still benefit, especially if they have elevated risk factors – ask your doctor.

Myth: Lesbians are low risk.
Truth: Some studies suggest lesbians may have lower HPV rates than women who have sex with men, but research is mixed.[3] HPV can still spread between women, so infection is possible even if someone has only had sex with women.

Low Provider Education: Providers do not always understand HIV+ people need diligent screening for HPV-related cancers or that yearly anal cancer screenings are the new standard.

KEY THINGS TO KNOW

HPV is the most common STI

- You may not even realize you have it

Some strains cause cancer

- HPV is linked to cervical, anal, penile, vulvar, throat, vaginal, and likely colorectal cancers
- Cancer risk is increased by HIV co-infection (20-40 times[1,2] higher risk for anal cancer)

The vaccine prevents infection

- It's safe, effective, and protects long-term health

WHO IS AT HIGHER RISK?

- People with many sexual partners
- People who have anal sex
- People living with HIV

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM HPV

39,000+[1] cancer cases/year in the U.S.

- HPV vaccine: Safe. Effective.
- Vaccination can prevent cancers.

Up through age 45 - talk to your doctor

- The vaccine may still be indicated.
- Screen regularly for related cancers, especially if you are HIV-positive.

Sources: 1. CDC, "Cancers Linked with HPV Each Year" 2. NCI, "HIV Infection and Cancer Risk" 3. Zhang et al., "HPV infection among a population-based sample of sexual minority women" (PMC)

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