



# HPV-Related Cancers Among Women: What You Need to Know to Reduce Your Risk

All sexually active people are at risk for infection with Human papillomavirus (HPV) and HPV-related cancers. This fact sheet provides information on HPV-related cancers among women and how to reduce your risk. If you are a sexually active woman, you can bring this fact sheet with you the next time you visit your health care provider to discuss ways to reduce your risk for HPV, including getting vaccinated with the HPV vaccine.

## What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). Most sexually active people will have one or more HPV infections in their life-time. The infection is spread primarily through sexual contact, such as vaginal or anal sex and it can also be transmitted by oral sex and other forms of skin-to-skin contact. Although most HPV infections will go away on their own without causing any problems, some strains of the virus can cause genital warts and other strains can lead to cancer.

**Up to 75% of sexually active women and men will acquire at least one HPV infection in their lifetime.**

**In most cases, women and men with HPV have no symptoms but they can still pass the virus on to their sex partners.**

**Sexually active adult women of all ages are at risk for HPV infection.**

## HPV causes:

Up to 100% of **cervical cancers**

Up to 90% of **anal cancers**

Up to 80% of **oropharyngeal cancers**

About 70% of **vaginal cancers**

About 30% of **vulvar cancers**

**Some strains of HPV can cause genital warts in the vagina, on the vulva, or in the anal area**

## How can I reduce my risk for HPV related cancer?

### HPV Vaccine

There is a HPV vaccine available that will protect you against the most common HPV strains that cause HPV-related cancers and genital warts.

### Condoms

The consistent use of latex condoms for vaginal, oral, and anal sex can reduce but not eliminate your risk of HPV infection.

*Remember: HPV can be transmitted through skin-to-skin contact so condoms may not protect you completely.*

### Cervical Screening

Routine screening using a Pap test is necessary to find cervical cancer before any symptoms develop. Check with your doctor on the screening requirements for your region. HPV vaccination should not replace routine screening. Optimal cervical cancer prevention involves both HPV vaccination and cervical screening.

### HPV and HIV

HPV infection has been associated with an increased risk of acquiring HIV. Once infected with both HPV and HIV, the body is less capable of clearing HPV, including strains that cause cancer. HIV-positive women are more likely to experience recurrences of HPV infection and genital warts.

### Who should I talk to about getting the HPV vaccine?

Talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse about how to obtain the vaccine.

### For more information:

**Cervical Dysplasia** is a pre-cancerous condition that results from HPV infection

<http://www.catie.ca/fact-sheets/infections/hpv-cervical-dysplasia-and-cancer>

### HPV Vaccines

<http://www.cancer.ca/en/prevention-and-screening/be-aware/viruses-and-bacteria/human-papillomavirus-hpv/hpv-vaccines/?region=on>

[http://convio.cancer.ca/site/PageServer?pagename=SSL\\_ON\\_TW\\_CervicalCancer\\_Vaccine#.V7zjUDaOpw8](http://convio.cancer.ca/site/PageServer?pagename=SSL_ON_TW_CervicalCancer_Vaccine#.V7zjUDaOpw8)

### Genital Warts

<http://smartsexresource.com/topics/genital-warts-and-hpv>

**Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends HPV vaccination for all females aged 9-26 years.**



**In addition to younger women, women over the age of 26 can also benefit from HPV vaccination.**

The vaccine can protect women from strains of HPV they were not exposed to earlier in life and can prevent reinfection from HPV strains that they have already been exposed to from past sexual activity.



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