

# HPV/Cervical Cancer

## What is HPV?

**Human papillomavirus (HPV)** is a common virus spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact. It is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the United States.

## How is HPV spread?

Sexually transmitted HPV spreads through direct skin-to-skin contact during vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has the virus. It's possible to spread the virus through hand-to-genital contact, but this type of transmission is less likely. HPV is not transmitted through blood or bodily fluids.

HPV is highly contagious, and someone with HPV can spread the virus even when there are no apparent symptoms.

## What symptoms/health problems can someone get if infected with HPV?

In most people, an HPV infection will have no signs or symptoms, and the immune system will clear the virus from the body within 12 to 24 months. However, you will remain contagious for as long as the virus is in your system.

When symptoms do occur, the most common sign of the virus is genital warts. Genital warts can be itchy and uncomfortable, and interfere with your daily life.

In a small percentage of people, HPV survives for years. A longer infection with a "high-risk" HPV type can cause cells to change and grow abnormally, turning into cancer. It usually takes years for this to develop. Cervical Cancer is the most common type of HPV-related cancer. Still, other types that can result from the infection include cancers of the vagina, vulva, penis, anus, and back of the throat (called oropharyngeal cancer), including the base of the tongue and tonsils.

## How common is HPV & Cervical Cancer?

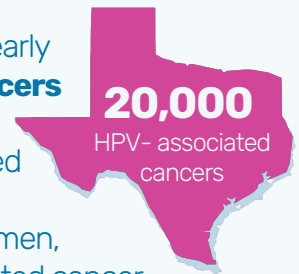
Most people who have sex will get an HPV infection at some point in their lives.

Nearly 80 million Americans, or 1 in 4, are currently infected with HPV. An estimated 12,000 new cases of Cervical Cancer occur each year in the United States, and each year, about 4,000 U.S. women will die from this disease.

## HPV and Cervical Cancer in Texas

**An estimated 17,581 Texas women are Cervical Cancer survivors.** These are Texas women diagnosed with Cervical Cancer between 1995 and 2020, who were alive as of January 1, 2021. It is estimated that 1,490 Texas women were diagnosed with Cervical Cancer, and 459 Texas women died from Cervical Cancer in 2024.

From 2018-2022, there were nearly **20,000 HPV-associated cancers diagnosed in Texas.** Among Texas women, the most reported HPV-associated cancer was Cervical Cancer. Among Texas men, the most reported HPV-associated cancer was oropharyngeal (back of the throat) cancer.

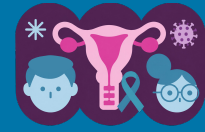


## How can someone find out if they have HPV or Cervical Cancer?

For cases of HPV resulting in genital or other bodily warts, a healthcare provider can typically diagnose them just by looking.

Asymptomatic HPV infections, long-lasting "high-risk" HPV infections, and incidences of Cervical Cancer can be detected through a Pap smear or HPV test for women. There is no FDA-approved test for HPV in men.





## How can someone protect against HPV and Cervical Cancer?

- 1** Getting the HPV vaccine. The vaccine is safe and effective and protects against the HPV types that are the most common cause of genital warts and cancer. The vaccine works best if you get it before becoming sexually active. Anyone can get the vaccine starting at age 9 and through age 26.
- 2** Getting screened and tested regularly. Early detection of HPV and abnormal cells prevents Cervical Cancer. Experts generally recommend that women get a Pap smear every 3 years starting at age 21, and an HPV test every 5 years starting at age 25.
- 3** Practice safer sex. Using condoms and dental dams correctly each time you have sex can reduce your risk of HPV infection.
- 4** Protect your partner(s). Let your partner know if you have HPV so that they can get tested, too.

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