



WOMEN'S HEALTH TESTING

# Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Information Sheet

## What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common sexually transmitted DNA virus (1). HPV is transmitted through vaginal, anal, or oral sex. It can be spread even when an infected individual does not show any symptoms. Most women effectively clear HPV infections within 6 to 12 months (2). However, specific HPV genotypes increase the risk of cervical cancer, one of the most common cancers affecting females around the world. More than 99% of all cervical cancers are caused by HPV (1).

## What are the symptoms of an HPV infection?

Usually HPV does not cause any symptoms, and is effectively cleared without any medical interventions. However, in some cases, genital warts can occur, or cell changes that lead to cervical cancer and other cancers of the vulva, vagina, penis, anus, or throat. Generally the types of HPV that cause warts differ from those that cause cancer (3).

## Who should take this HPV test?

HPV testing for the 14 high-risk HPV genotypes is recommended for screening for cervical cancer in women aged 30 years and older. Routine screening for HPV is not recommended for under 30 years of age, as HPV is very common in young people, and will often clear without intervention within one to two years (5).

## How common is HPV?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States. An estimated 43 million Americans were infected with HPV in 2018, with most infections among people in their late teens or early 20s. Almost every non-vaccinated sexually active individual will get HPV at some time in his or her life (3).

## Which HPV genotypes are high risk for cervical cancer?

There are more than 100 genotypes of HPV, of which 14 are considered high risk for cervical disease – genotypes 16, 18, 31, 33, 35, 39, 45, 51, 52, 56, 58, 59, 66, and 68. Individuals who have a persistent infection with one of these pathogenic genotypes have an increased risk for cervical carcinoma or severe dysplasia (4).

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## How is HPV diagnosed?

Nucleic acid tests accurately identify individuals who are infected with one of the 14 high-risk HPV strains. Detection of HPV nucleic acid (a positive test result) is indicative of an active HPV infection, but does not mean that cervical dysplasia or cervical cancer is present. Follow up testing is recommended for any positive results, with protocols varying based on the results of recent pap smears (6).

## HPV vaccination

HPV vaccination is safe and effective to prevent against diseases (including cancer) caused by HPV. It is recommended at age 11 or 12 years, and for everyone through to 26 years, if not vaccinated already. Vaccination for individuals older than 26 years provides less benefit, as most sexually active adults have already been exposed to HPV (3).

## How is HPV treated?

There is no treatment for HPV itself; however, there are treatments for the health problems associated with HPV. Genital warts can be treated with prescription medication, and cervical precancer can be effectively treated. Any cancers that are associated with HPV are more treatable when diagnosed and treated early; hence the importance of routine screening (6).

### Where can I find more info?

Visit [www.genetrackdiagnostics.com](http://www.genetrackdiagnostics.com) for full test information, including specimen collection requirements

#### CONTACT US:

Email: [support@genetrackdiagnostics.com](mailto:support@genetrackdiagnostics.com)

Phone: 1-888-802-0703

#### NOTE:

This brochure is provided for general information purposes only. It is not intended to replace medical advice from a health professional.

#### References:

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- (6) Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Treatment and Care. (2016, December 28). CDC.