

# **Northwest Gynecological Oncology**

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## **HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS**

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is one of the most common STDs in the United States. More than 100 types of this virus have been identified. Some types are spread from person to person through sexual contact.

Like many STDs, there often are no signs of genital HPV. However, a few types of HPV cause warts. For women, these warts can appear on the vulva, vagina, cervix, and anus. For men, they can appear on the penis, scrotum, anus, or anywhere else in the genital area.

Sometimes warts go away on their own. If they do not, there are several treatments for warts available. However, over-the-counter wart medications should never be used on genital warts.

Even after the warts have cleared up, the virus may be present. The virus can remain in the body for weeks or years without any symptoms.

Some types of HPV are linked to cancer in both women and men. Certain types are known to be a major cause of cancer of the cervix. However, very few women with HPV develop this type of cancer. HPV also may be linked to cancer of the anus, vulva, vagina, penis, head, and neck.

There is a vaccine that prevents the two types of HPV that cause the most cases of cancer of the cervix and the two types that cause most cases of genital warts. You do not need to be tested for HPV before you get vaccinated. Because this vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV, women who are vaccinated should still have regular Pap tests. The vaccine is not a treatment for current HPV infection and will not prevent all cases of cervical cancer or genital warts.