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### ▶ **What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?**

HPV is a very common virus and one of the most common sexually transmitted infections. It is usually spread through skin-to-skin contact with an infected person.

Facts:

- There are more than 100 strains of HPV
- Three out of four adults will get HPV at some time during their lives.

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### ▶ **How is HPV spread?**

HPV is spread usually through skin-to-skin contact (kissing or touching) with the genital areas (e.g. vagina, vulva, penis, scrotum or anus) or by oral sex with an infected person.

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### ▶ **How can I tell if I have HPV?**

**Most sexually active people who have HPV are unaware that they have it and have no symptoms. You can pass the infection to your partners without even knowing it.**

HPV can cause serious health problems, including genital warts and certain cancers, if the body is not able to fight off the virus.

Signs and symptoms of genital warts:

Small or large raised or flat bump(s) (like cauliflower) in the genital area (vagina [inside or outside], penis, scrotum, anus or thighs)

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### ▶ **Is there a test for HPV?**

A health care provider can tell if you have genital warts by looking at them or by putting a vinegar solution on the area to see if any wart tissue shows up.

Regular cervical screening (Pap test) is important for women who are sexually active and are 21 years of age or older. If your Pap test shows that HPV has caused changes to your cervix, you may need to see a specialist for treatment.

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### ▶ **How is HPV treated?**

Genital warts can be treated by a health care provider or treatments can be ordered to apply at home. If not treated, genital warts may go away on their own, stay the same, or continue to grow.

Treatment of the warts may speed up clearing of the infection, however recurrences are common. Treatment also lowers the risk of passing genital warts to others.

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### ▶ **How do I protect myself and others?**

Talk with your partner and make informed decisions BEFORE having sex and plan to:

- abstain or limit your number of sex partners
- ask your partners to be tested before you have sex
- always use condoms or barriers for vaginal, oral and anal sex
- get an STI check-up—especially if either of you have had more than one sex partner or think you have an infection
- consider the effect that alcohol and drug use can have on sexual decision-making

A vaccine is available that protects against many of the common strains of HPV including those that cause genital warts, as well as cancer of the cervix, anus, and throat. .

The [HPV vaccine](#) is recommended for females between 9-45 years and males between 9-26 years of age. It is also recommended if you have been told that you have HPV.

HPV vaccine is publicly funded (free) in Ontario for girls and boys in grade 7 and is offered at school clinics. There is also a 'catch-up' program available for students who missed getting the vaccine in Grade 7. Check with the health unit or your health care provider to see if you qualify.

Drug Identification Number (DIN) for HPV vaccines

Gardasil 4 DIN #: 02283190

Gardasil 9 DIN #: 02437058

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### ▶ **Is follow-up necessary?**

Yes. If you have had treatment for genital warts it is important to return for a check-up to make sure they are gone.

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### ▶ **Who can I talk to if I have more questions?**

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



**simcoe  
muskoka**  
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 705-721-7520  
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520  
[www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)



### For More Information

[Ministry of Health and Long Term Care Immunization Program](#)

To speak with someone at the health unit contact [Health Connection](#) or call and ask for Sexual Health.



### Resources

[Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Centres for Disease and Control Public Health Agency of Canada Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections 2008](#)  
[www.hpvinfo.ca](http://www.hpvinfo.ca)  
[Cancer Care Ontario Canadian Guidelines for Sexually Transmitted Infections](#)

August 2016

# Human Papilloma virus (HPV)

