

# The DC Health and Wellness Center

## Questions? Want to get tested?

Call us to make an appointment or walk in and see us



### Sexual health services for everyone in DC

The DC Health and Wellness Center provides confidential, comprehensive sexual health services to everyone who lives, works, or plays in DC.

**Services are provided at low or no cost.** These include: sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing, diagnosis, and treatment; PrEP; PEP; contraception; vaccines; rapid ART (HIV treatment); and mental health counseling.



202-741-7692



[dchealthandwellness.org](http://dchealthandwellness.org)



77 P Street NE  
Washington, DC 20002



**Clinic Hours:**  
Mon Tue Wed & Fri: 9:00am-3:00pm  
Thurs: 9:00am-11:30am only

## HPV

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the US. HPV is spread through vaginal or anal sex. Most people do not have symptoms and do not know they have an infection. Your body can fight off the infection and you can "clear" the virus from your body. However, if the virus is not cleared, you could be at risk for certain cancers.



## Symptoms and Complications

**There are many different types of HPV. Some types of HPV can cause cancer; these are called "high-risk" types.**

- HPV can cause cancer in the cervix (the part of the uterus that leads to the vagina)
- HPV can also cause cancers of the anus, penis, mouth, tongue, and throat.

**Other types of HPV are called "low-risk;" these types do not cause cancer but can cause other problems, like warts.**

- HPV can cause warts on any part of the body that has touched an infected area.
- Genital warts usually look like flesh-colored bumps on the anus, penis, or vulva. They can be small or large, raised or flat. Sometimes they are shaped like a cauliflower.
- The warts can also be in places where you cannot see them, like the cervix, vagina, or rectum.



## Testing

HPV is not usually tested for unless you have symptoms. Most people who have sex will have HPV at some point in their lives, and most healthy people can clear the infection.

### **Cervical cancer**

- Cervical cancer is screened for with a **pap smear**. Your clinician will place a medical tool called a speculum inside the vagina so they can see the cervix. The clinician will brush a swab against the cervix and then send this swab to a lab. The lab results will tell you if there are any changes in your cervix that could lead to cancer.
- If you are over 30 and receiving a pap smear, you will also get HPV co-testing. This means you will have a pap smear and an HPV test done at the same time.

### **Anal, penile, mouth, and tongue cancers**

- There is no regular screening for these cancers. If you think you may have one of these, please speak with your clinician about further testing.



## Treatment and Prevention

### **HPV Treatment**

- There is no medication that can cure the HPV virus.
- However, there are treatments for the symptoms HPV can cause.
- A clinician can remove genital warts by freezing, burning, or cutting them off. They may also prescribe a cream to put on the warts. **Do not try to remove the warts yourself.**

### **Prevention Tips**

- Get vaccinated! The HPV vaccine can protect against high-risk types of HPV. Everyone up to age 45 can get the HPV vaccine. It's safe and effective. Depending on your age, the HPV vaccine requires 2 or 3 shots over a few months.
- Use condoms - they are very good at preventing HPV infection. However, HPV can happen in areas that a condom does not cover, like warts on the thigh or scrotum. If you touch them, you can get HPV.
- Get pap smears regularly.