

USEFUL INFORMATION

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST HPV



**THIS BROCHURE
WILL TELL YOU HOW
TO PROTECT YOURSELF
AGAINST HPV INFECTIONS
AND HPV-RELATED DISEASES**

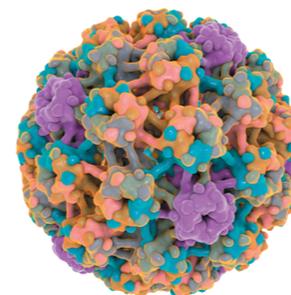
**SAMEN
TEGEN
HPV.**

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HPV MEANS HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS

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WHAT IS HPV?

HPV stands for **Human Papilloma Virus**. HPV is a very contagious virus that consists of more than 100 different types. Most of those HPV types are harmless. However, there are high-risk HPV types such as 16 and 18 which are less harmless and can even cause certain types of cancer.¹⁻³

This brochure will tell you more about this and how to prevent HPV infection.

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MOST HPV TYPES ARE HARMLESS, BUT SOME ARE NOT

HOW DO YOU GET HPV?

HPV can infect the cells in your cervix, cells around the genitals or mouth cavity and pharynx. You can get it through sex with someone who is infected. You can get HPV from vaginal, anal and oral sex. It can also be transferred through skin-to-skin contact. HPV is highly contagious and can be transmitted from one person to the other very easily. Using a condom partially protects you against HPV. But, you can still become infected if the virus gets on your hands or goes through your mouth.^{1,4-6}

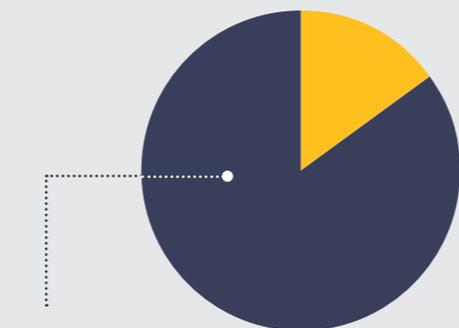
Is HPV common?

HPV is very common. About 80% of all men and women in the Netherlands who are sexually active get infected with HPV at some point in their lives.¹

How can you tell you have been infected with HPV?

If you are infected with HPV, you usually do not notice anything. In most cases, the body will get rid of the HPV infection within 2 years. However, in some cases, the body does not get rid of the HPV infection. In those cases, the virus will remain and cancerous cells may develop.⁷

WHAT IS YOUR CHANCE TO EVER GET HPV?



80%

Approx. 80% of all men and women in the Netherlands who are sexually active get infected with HPV at some point in their lives.¹

HPV IS HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS AND CAN BE TRANSMITTED THROUGH SEX AND SKIN-TO-SKIN CONTACT

EFFECTS OF HPV

If you do not get rid of HPV and the virus stays in your body, it could cause problems sooner or later. The nature of these problems depends on the HPV type. For instance, someone with low-risk HPV can get genital warts, while high-risk HPV can cause certain types of cancer.⁸ The most common type of cancer caused by HPV is cervical cancer.⁴

Other types of cancer also occur, such as cancer of the anus, head-neck, throat, mouth, penis, vagina and vulva.³ (see 'HPV and other types of cancers' on page 7).

HPV CAN CAUSE GENITAL WARTS AND CERTAIN TYPES OF CANCER



APPROX. 80% OF SEXUALLY ACTIVE MEN AND WOMEN GET INFECTED WITH HPV AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES

HPV and cervical cancer

There are twelve high-risk HPV types that can cause cervical cancer (and other HPV-related cancers).⁸ This does not happen immediately after you become infected with HPV, but gradually. HPV which is not eliminated by the body, can settle in the cells in the cervix. This may cause damage to those cells. Often, your body is able to clear up the HPV and the mild to moderately abnormal cells within two years. If that does not happen, these abnormal cells can develop

early stages of cancer. This can lead to cervical cancer after about 15 years.^{1,9}

Less than 1% of women with an HPV infection will go on to get cervical cancer.¹ You can significantly reduce the risk of developing cervical cancer with HPV vaccination amongst other things.

(see 'Can you prevent HPV?' on page 10).¹⁰

Population screening for cervical cancer

If you are infected with HPV and have abnormal cervical cells, you don't usually notice anything.¹

Therefore, all women aged between 30 and 60 years old are invited to participate in the population screening for cervical cancer. A smear will then be taken from the cervix (this

means that cells are collected with a spatula) which will be examined in the laboratory.

By doing this, any precancerous stages of cervical cancer will be detected and lead to early treatments. This can prevent cervical cancer.¹¹

Self-testing option

Would you find it embarrassing to have a smear test at the GP's practice? And is this a reason for you to not participate in the national screening programme? Then you could request the self-testing option. By doing so, you are able to do the smear test yourself. The laboratory will test it for HPV.¹³

HPV and other types of cancer

HPV can (in the long-term) also cause other types of cancer. Think about cancer of the anus, throat, mouth, penis, vagina

and vulva.³ This may cause symptoms such as a burning sensation, bleeding, pain and abnormalities.¹

HPV and genital warts

Low-risk HPV types (types 6 and 11) can cause genital warts in both men and women. Genital warts are a sexually transmitted disease (STD) and approx. 90% of all cases originate as a result of HPV.⁴ In 2021, GPs in the Netherlands diagnosed an estimated 46,494 cases of genital warts. 58% of the diagnoses occurred in men.¹⁴

Population screening for cervical cancer

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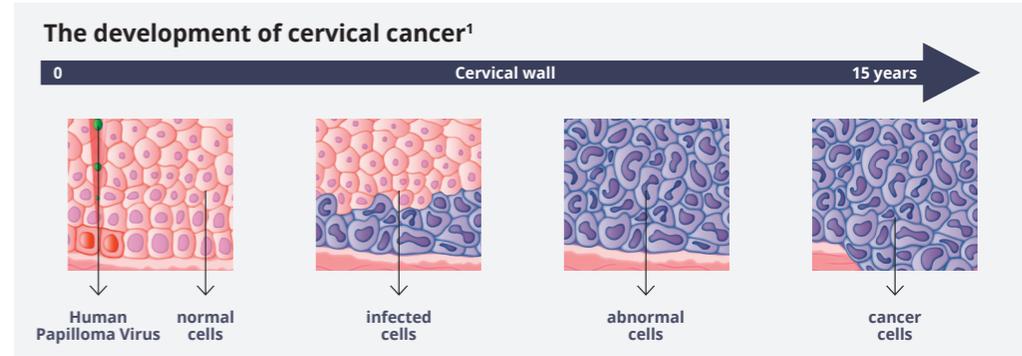
By doing this, any precancerous stages of cervical cancer will be detected and lead to early treatments. This can prevent cervical cancer.¹¹

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IN 2021, AN EARLY STAGE OF CERVICAL CANCER WAS FOUND IN

6.246

PEOPLE IN THE NETHERLANDS¹²



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IT CAN TAKE 15 YEARS TO DEVELOP CERVICAL CANCER

FACTS AND FIGURES

Genital warts

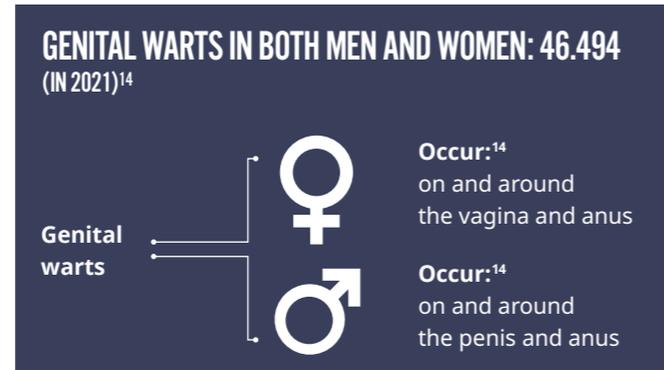
You can get genital warts, amongst other things, from (vaginal, anal or oral) sex with someone who has genital warts or is infected with an HPV type that causes genital warts. You can also become infected by touching someone else's genital warts or, for example, by using the same towel.⁵

Genital warts are located on and around the penis, vagina or anus. They are often clustered together, can look like tiny cauliflowers and are pinkish-red or greyish-white.¹⁴ Genital warts can cause symptoms such as itching, pain or burning sensation. They may disappear spontaneously, but often, it takes a very long time.

“THERE ARE STILL QUITE A FEW MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HPV, AND IT WOULD BE GOOD IF THOSE WERE ELIMINATED.”

Coco (35)

Because genital warts are usually caused by HPV and the virus can stay in your body, they can return. Genital warts can be treated with specific ointment. If this does not work, the physician can remove them. After treatment, the warts can sometimes return. If this happens, you can go to the doctor to have them treated again.^{14,18}



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HPV-related types of cancer

There are different types of HPV-related cancer that can affect both men and women.

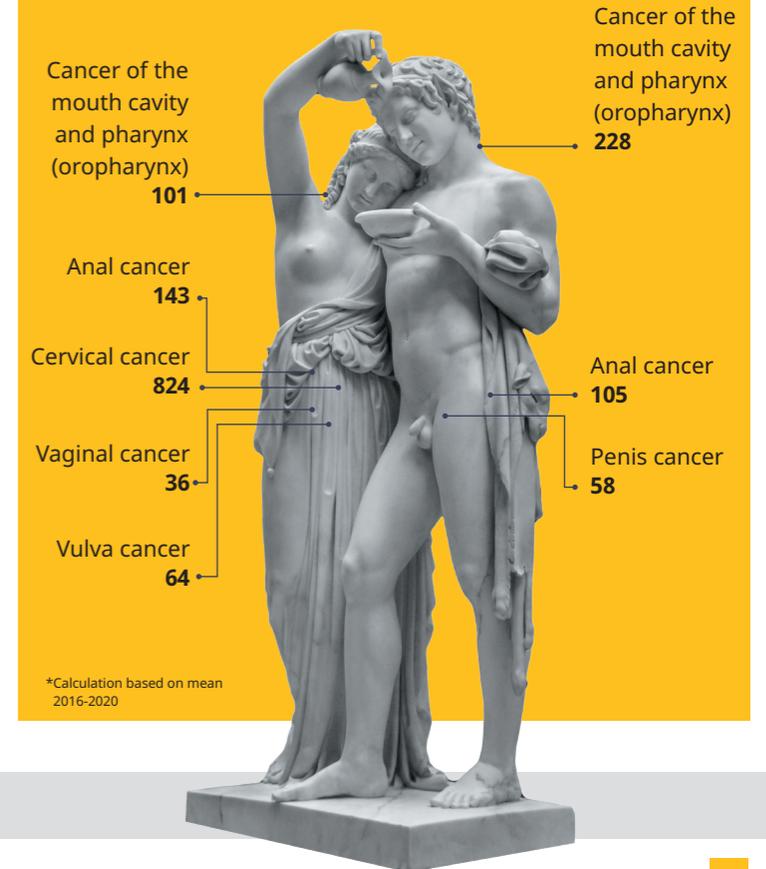
The most common type of HPV-related cancer in women is cervical cancer. The disease mainly affects young women: in the Netherlands it is the third most common type of cancer in women aged between 15 and 44 years.

However, HPV can also cause other types of cancer such as cancer of the pharynx and oral cavity, the vagina, the anus and the penis.¹⁵

“IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS OR A FEELING THAT SOMETHING’S NOT RIGHT, PLEASE HAVE IT CHECKED. YOU WILL DEFINITELY CATCH IT IN TIME.”

Shaun (34)

Estimated yearly number of cases of cancer caused by HPV in the Netherlands^{16,17*}



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CAN HPV BE PREVENTED?

HPV is very common and highly contagious. HPV vaccination can help protect you against certain types of cancers caused by HPV.¹⁰

Vaccination against HPV

In the Netherlands, HPV vaccination is included in the National Immunisation Programme. In the past, only girls who turned 13 years old used to receive an invitation to be vaccinated. Boys can also get and transmit HPV. This is why the government has decided that from 2022 onwards, both girls and boys will receive an invitation to get a vaccination free

of charge when they become 10. The HPV vaccination which has been included in the National Immunisation Programme consists of two vaccinations with six months in between.¹⁹

Screening/population screening for cervical cancer

All women aged between 30 and 60 years are invited to participate in the population screening for cervical cancer. With this program, preliminary stages of this type of cancer can be detected early. As a result, the malignancy is usually not yet advanced, meaning it can be treated at an earlier stage, which makes it more effective.¹¹



Stop smoking

Amongst other things, smoking damages your cells, making your immune system less capable of clearing the virus. As a result, your body is less able to clear the virus. Therefore, quitting smoking reduces the risk of HPV infection.¹

HPV CAN CAUSE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CANCER AND GENITAL WARTS

Condoms

By using a condom during sex, you reduce the chance of getting genital warts. Yet, a condom doesn't fully protect you against HPV. The virus can already be transmitted if you come into contact with the skin around the genitals of someone who carries the virus. This means you should not touch the warts. You can also become infected with HPV if you use the same towel as someone who has genital warts. You can also prevent genital warts by getting vaccinated.^{2,7}

Catch-up campaign HPV-vaccination

Young people up to the age of 18 who have not yet had the vaccination can also receive a free HPV vaccination in 2022 and 2023. They will automatically receive an invitation by letter. More information on who will receive an invitation for free HPV-vaccination will follow in the near future. Take a look at [Rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl](https://rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl) to find the latest information about this topic. People older than 26 years old are able to get vaccinated at their own expense, for instance through their GP.²⁰



HPV VACCINATION CAN HELP PROTECT AGAINST HPV INFECTION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HPV AND HPV VACCINATION

Can you become infected with HPV if you have only had sex once in your life?

Yes, you can. HPV is incredibly contagious. If you have sex once without a condom with a person who has HPV, you have a 50% chance of HPV infection.⁷

Can you get HPV if you don't go 'all the way' with sex?

Yes, you can. HPV is incredibly contagious. It can be transferred through bodily contact before and after sex. You can also get or spread the virus through your hands/fingers.^{3,7}

Is vaccination at a later age still useful?

Even at a later age, when you are sexually active or have had an HPV infection, vaccination can protect you against HPV. If the type that someone tests positive for is gone from the body or under control, vaccination may produce antibodies against certain HPV types. This may prevent these HPV types to become active in the body again or prevent re-infection. At the same time, the vaccine can provide protection against the other HPV types in the vaccin.²¹

Can you have sex if you have had genital warts?

Yes, you can have sex if you have genital warts. You can pass on these warts through sexual contact, but they are not dangerous. However, it is recommended to use a condom if you have sex with more than one person. Condoms reduce the chance of passing on genital warts, but they do not protect for the full 100%. You can also get or pass genital warts on through your fingers.¹⁸

Is HPV infection always the cause of cervical cancer?

More than 99% of all cervical cancer cases are caused by an HPV infection.²²

Can you get HPV by sharing things like towels?

Yes, that's possible. HPV is highly contagious, so it is easily transmitted, including through using the same things that come into contact with your skin, genitals or mucous membranes.⁵

How much does HPV vaccination cost?

All boys and girls will receive an invitation for HPV vaccination in the year they turn 10. If they fall within the National Immunisation Programme, vaccination for them will be free of charge.¹⁹ If you are outside of this age group, and want to receive an HPV vaccination, your GP or the municipal health service GGD can charge you for the vaccination. The costs may vary, depending on who offers

the vaccination. You could check if your health insurance will reimburse you.³

How many vaccinations do you receive if you get the HPV vaccination?

Everyone below the age of 27 who receives HPV-vaccination within the national immunization program, will need two shots to be protected.²

Is HPV vaccination safe?

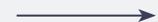
Various large studies have assessed the side effects of HPV vaccination. This research showed that there were no more side effects in the vaccinated group compared to the non-vaccinated group. Vaccines are only allowed for use if they have proven to be effective and safe.²

What is the effectivity of HPV-vaccination?

HPV-vaccinations are 90-100% effective against an infection with the HPV-types within the vaccine. These are mostly high-risk HPV-types that can cause cancer. Some vaccines also protect against low-risk HPV-types, that among others can cause genital warts.²⁴

The HPV vaccination contains virus, doesn't it? Doesn't that just cause HPV?

A HPV vaccine contains harmless particles of HPV types. This is necessary because these harmless pieces prompt your body to make antibodies against the 'real' HPV types. So, the HPV vaccination doesn't make you ill; on the contrary, it can protect against HPV.²³



When should you not be vaccinated against HPV?

If you have a high temperature, if you are too ill to go outside, if you are pregnant or if you have a condition or use medication causing a severe immune system disorder. In those cases, it is better to get your HPV vaccination at a later date.²³

Is there any experience with HPV vaccination in other countries?

There is also a lot of experience in other countries with vaccination against HPV. In 2019, HPV vaccination was included in the National Immunisation Programme in 100 countries. An increasing number of countries are also vaccinating boys through the National Immunisation Programme as is already the case in England, Ireland, Norway, Austria, Australia and Canada.²³



SOURCES (consulted between March 24, 2021, and February 15, 2022)

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SamentegenHPV.nl

Learning more about HPV and
vaccination to prevent HPV infection.

Scan this QR code and
visit the website.



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