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## HPV and Genital Warts: Understanding Your Diagnosis

HPV (human papillomavirus) is the virus that causes genital warts. If you have HPV, you're not alone. Millions of people carry this virus. Finding out you have HPV may be upsetting for you and your partner. But learning about HPV and its treatments can make you both feel better. Then you can go on with your lives together.

### Accepting Your Diagnosis

At first, it may be hard to respond to what you've learned. Take time to let everything sink in. Here are some things to think about:

- How your body looks. Remember that genital warts can be removed. You may feel better if you share any concerns about your body with your partner.
- Long-term health issues. Some strains of HPV are linked with cervical and other cancers. But most people with HPV do not develop cancer. Taking care of yourself and seeing your healthcare provider as directed reduces the cancer risk even more.
- Protecting your partner. Being honest about HPV will protect your partner's health. You and your partner can take steps to keep HPV from spreading. If you're with someone new, talk about HPV before you have sex.

### Talking to Your Partner

- If you're calm, your partner may find it easier to stay calm. Remember, HPV can take months or years to produce warts. It's nearly impossible to know who was infected first. Try not to blame each other.
- Suggest that your partner get checked. Even if no warts are present, visiting a healthcare provider may make your partner feel better.
- When you both feel ready, it's okay to have sex. It's safest to use a latex condom every time. But know that condoms and other barriers only protect the skin they cover. Warts are contagious, so avoid touching them. (This includes oral sex.)
- If you're in a committed relationship and are not currently using condoms, discuss whether you want to change your habits. Remember that condoms are the only effective way to protect against many diseases.
- Suggest that your partner ask his or her healthcare provider about the HPV vaccine. And ask your own healthcare provider whether this vaccine is right for you.



**When you're ready, talk to your partner about your diagnosis.**