



# ***Know the facts: HPV can be prevented***

## **What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?**

It is a virus which women and men can catch if they have sex with someone who is infected with the virus.

## **How do people get HPV?**

Women and men get this infection through sexual contact. The virus can infect the genital area (sex organs). For example, the virus can infect the vulva (area outside the vagina), lining of the vagina, cervix, rectum or skin of the penis.

## **Is it dangerous?**

Most of the time, it is not dangerous. However, it is very serious when it leads to cervical, genital or anal cancers.

## **How do I know if I have HPV?**

Most people who have HPV don't know they have it because it causes no symptoms. Some people might get genital warts or notice changes in the cervix, vulva, anus or penis.

## **What should I do if I think I have HPV?**

You should go to the doctor, a public health nurse or another medical professional. Women should have a Pap test which can detect pre-cancerous and cancerous cells in the cervix. There are no tests for men other than a visual screening.

## **What are some treatments for HPV?**

A medical professional will treat changes in the skin, warts and pre-cancerous changes in the cervix.

## **How do I prevent HPV?**

- 1) The surest way to not get HPV is to have NO genital contact or sex with another person.
- 2) Talk to your healthcare provider about the HPV vaccine. The vaccine, given to young women before they are sexually active, can prevent most types of the HPV virus. The vaccine is also somewhat effective for young women who have been sexually active. There is no vaccine for men. The vaccine is free to Wyoming EqualityCare (Medicaid) clients if their providers recommend it.
- 3) If you are sexually active:
  - Be sure your partner is not infected. However, it is hard to tell if your partner is infected.
  - Be sure to use condoms. While condoms do not prevent HPV (even if genital areas are protected, the virus can be passed) their use has been associated with a lower rate of cervical cancer and will protect against many other sexually transmitted diseases.



**HPV is a very serious virus because it can cause cancer. But it is preventable.**

## Where can I get more information?

You can speak with a **HealthyTogether!** nurse at 1-888-545-1710 24-hours a day. You can also ask for information from your doctor, a public health nurse or another healthcare provider.

For more information on HPV, visit the Centers for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV>.

**Call 1-888-545-1710 to speak to a nurse 24-hours a day.**

*Disclaimer: Information or education provided in this fact sheet is not intended to replace medical advice from your healthcare provider. The information provided on this fact sheet is not all-inclusive of this topic.*

**Healthy Together!** is offered by the Wyoming Department of Health to all Wyoming EqualityCare clients at no cost. The program provides one-on-one support from a nurse, educational materials to encourage the self-management of health and assistance in coordinating care among multiple providers. **Healthy Together!** also provides EqualityCare clients with information on weight loss, smoking cessation, and how to adopt healthy lifestyles. **Healthy Together!** was named the Best Government Disease Management Program by the Disease Management Association of America in 2005.