



# GEORGIAN BAY WOMEN\*S CLINIC

## HPV: What You Should Know

### What's HPV?

HPV stands for Human Papillomavirus. It's a common virus that can affect the skin and mucous membranes, including those in the genital area. There are many different types of HPV, some of which can cause genital warts and others that can lead to various cancers.

### What Are the Symptoms?

HPV infections often don't cause any symptoms, so many people with HPV don't know they have it. However, some types of HPV can cause:

Genital Warts: These may appear as small bumps or clusters in the genital or anal area.

Abnormal Pap Smear Results: In people with cervixes, certain strains of HPV can cause abnormal changes in cervical cells that can be detected through a Pap smear.

Cancer: Some types of HPV are linked to cervical, anal, penile, vulvar, vaginal, and throat cancers.

## **How Can You Prevent It?**

**Get Vaccinated:** HPV vaccines are available and can protect against certain types of HPV that cause genital warts and cancer. Vaccination is recommended for both males and females.

**Practice Safe Sex:** Using condoms can reduce the risk of HPV transmission, but they don't provide complete protection since the virus can be present on areas not covered by the condom.

**Regular Screening:** People with a cervix should undergo regular Pap smears to screen for cervical cancer, which can detect abnormal changes caused by HPV.

## **How Is It Diagnosed?**

**Physical Examination:** Healthcare providers can often diagnose genital warts by visually inspecting the affected area.

**Pap Smear:** People with a cervix may undergo a Pap smear to check for abnormal changes in cervical cells caused by HPV.

**DNA Test:** In some cases, a DNA test may be done to identify specific strains of HPV in the genital area.

## **How Is It Treated?**

**Genital Warts:** Treatment options for genital warts may include topical medications, cryotherapy (freezing), laser therapy, or surgical removal.

**Abnormal Pap Smear Results:** Depending on the severity of the abnormalities, further testing or treatment may be recommended to monitor or address the changes.

**Cancer:** Treatment for HPV-related cancers varies depending on the type and stage of cancer but may include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or targeted therapy.

## **Follow-Up**

**Regular Screening:** Follow up with your healthcare provider as recommended for regular Pap smears or other screening tests.

**Vaccination:** Complete the recommended HPV vaccine series if you haven't already done so.

**Educate Yourself:** Learn more about HPV, its risks, and how to protect yourself and others from infection.

## **Remember:**

- HPV is common, and most sexually active individuals will contract it at some point in their lives.
- While HPV can lead to genital warts and certain cancers, vaccination and regular screening can help prevent and

detect HPV-related health issues.

- If you have questions or concerns about HPV, talk to your healthcare provider for guidance and information.