



The FACTS about Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and Immunization

What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is very common. It is spread by sex and sexual contact (including skin to skin). Almost everyone gets HPV at some time in their life. Often, the body gets rid of HPV on its own, and you never know you were infected.


There are over 100 different types of HPV. While some types are harmless, others can be harmful.

HPV is the cause of:

- All genital warts and
- Almost all cervical cancer

HPV can cause:

- Some other less common but serious cancers, including cancers of the vulva, vagina, penis, anus, and oropharynx (back of throat including base of tongue and tonsils)



1 to 2 Yukon women develop invasive cervical cancer each year.

There is no cure for HPV. However, immunization can prevent HPV infection. HPV immunization prevents the types of HPV infection that cause most cases of cervical cancer.



In 2010, 1550 Yukon women between the ages of 14-69 participated in a study about HPV.

The study found 1 in 4 Yukon women who participated were infected at that time with HPV.

How common is HPV?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in Canada and across the world.

About 70 per cent of women will have at least one type of HPV infection over their lifetime.


In Yukon and elsewhere in Canada, people under the age of 25 have the highest rates of HPV.

How do you get HPV?

HPV is spread through sex and sexual contact (including skin to skin). This includes any kind of touching with the vagina, vulva, penis, scrotum, or anus of someone who is infected.

How can you protect yourself from HPV?

1. Anyone who has sex is at risk for HPV. Immunization is the best way to prevent the most common harmful types of HPV. HPV immunization will greatly reduce your risk of cervical cancer.
2. Using a condom during sex will reduce, but not take away the risk of HPV. You can still be infected by contact with areas the condom doesn't cover.
3. Limiting the number of people you have sex with and delaying the age when you first have sex can also reduce your risk of being infected with HPV.

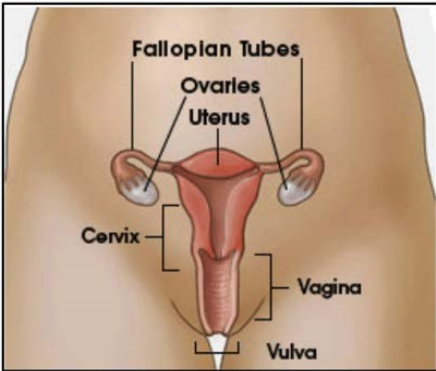


In 2011, over 200 procedures (colposcopy) were done in Yukon for abnormal changes in the cervix caused by HPV.

How do you know if you have HPV?

HPV often has no noticeable symptoms. Many people never know when they have it. Sometimes, the genital warts are visible and can be treated. For women, the only way to know if you are infected with the cancer-causing types of HPV is to have regular Pap testing.

Women should have their first Pap test within three years of becoming sexually active or by age 21. Talk to your health care provider to find out how often you need to have a Pap test.



The cervix is the lower part of the uterus that leads into the vagina.

What is a Pap test?

A Pap test checks for changes in the cells of the cervix. This means that changes can be treated before they can develop into cancer.

During a Pap test, your health care provider inserts a speculum into your vagina so your cervix is visible. Then a few cells are wiped from your cervix and sent to a lab for testing.

Who should get HPV immunization?

HPV immunization is available for girls and women ages 9-45 and boys and men ages 9-26 who want to protect themselves from the diseases caused by HPV.

HPV immunization is recommended for all children in Grade 6, as of school year 2017-2018.

Is HPV immunization effective?

HPV immunization is very effective. HPV immunization protects against the most common types of HPV, including those that cause most cases of cervical cancer and almost all genital warts.

HPV immunization is most effective when given prior to sexual contact in order to provide the best protection against genital warts and cervical cancer.

Immunization only works if you are immunized *before* your body sees HPV. If you are already infected with one type of HPV, the immunization will not cure or prevent it; however, you will be protected from the other types, depending on which vaccine you have had for your series.

Is HPV immunization safe?


HPV immunization is very safe.

Some people may have mild side effects from HPV immunization such as pain, redness, itchiness and swelling at the place where the needle was given. Less commonly, a slight fever, nausea, dizziness, headache or vomiting may occur.

Side effects are usually mild to moderate and only last for a day or two. Severe allergic reactions are rare, begin immediately and can be treated by the person who gave the vaccine.

You should stay on site for at least 15 minutes after vaccination so that an allergic reaction, if there is one, can be treated.

Over 200 million doses of HPV immunization have been administered worldwide.



If a person has not already been infected by one of the types of HPV contained in the immunization, the protection against the types of HPV covered in the vaccine is nearly 100%.

This is why immunization is recommended before the onset of sexual activity.

What you may not know...

- By age 13 (Grade 7/8) 7-13 per cent of Yukon boys and girls have had sex.
- By ages 14-15 (Grade 9/10) about 1 in 3 Yukon boys are sexually active.
- By ages 14-15 (Grade 9/10) about 1 in 4 Yukon girls are sexually active.



Who pays for HPV immunization in the Yukon?

HPV immunization is publicly funded (free) to all children in Grade 6; it is part of the regular school immunization program. Everyone else will have to pay for the immunization unless they have already started the immunization series. This is true for First Nations and non-First Nations residents of Yukon.

If you are not eligible for the publicly funded HPV immunization program you can still receive the HPV immunization at all Yukon health centres, but you will have to pay for this immunization. The HPV immunization costs about \$258.00 for a series of three shots. You can pay for each shot separately, \$86.00 per dose.

Please contact your local health centre for more information, including current immunization costs.

How can I reduce my risk of developing cervical cancer and genital warts?

The following steps will lower your risk of developing diseases caused by HPV:

1. **Getting the HPV immunization.** HPV immunization will greatly reduce your risk of cervical cancer, especially if you receive it before becoming sexually active.
2. **Having regular Pap tests** to detect changes to the cervix before they become cancerous.
3. **Practicing safer sex.** Delay becoming sexually active. Limit the number of people you have sex with. Always use a condom.
4. **Not smoking.** Smokers are about twice as likely as non-smokers to develop cervical cancer. If you stop smoking now, you can also reduce your risk of cervical cancer.



For more information on HPV and HPV immunization go to:

Yukon Health and Social Services:

http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/hpv_vaccine.php

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada:

<http://www.hpvinfos.ca>

Aboriginal Sexual Health:

<http://www.aboriginalsexualhealth.ca>

Immunize B.C.: <http://immunizebc.ca/diseases-vaccinations/hpv>

Health Canada: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/hpv-vph-eng.php>

When in doubt, ask!

If you have any questions about HPV or HPV immunization, or if there is anything you don't understand, contact...

In Whitehorse:

- Whitehorse Health Centre: 667-8864
- Kwanlin Dün Health Centre: 668-7289
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control: 667-8323

In the communities:

- Watson Lake Health Centre: 536-5253
- Dawson Health Centre: 993-4300
- All other rural communities: community prefix + 4444 • Yukon Communicable Disease Control: toll-free 1-800-661-0408 extension 8323

Produced and Developed by the Yukon HPV Steering Committee

Yukon Chief Medical Officer of Health, Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research, Yukon Government Health and Social Services (Community Nursing; Yukon Communicable Disease Control; Health Promotion; Communications), Council of Yukon First Nations, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Selkirk First Nation, Ta'an Kwächän Council, Champagne & Aishihik First Nation, Kluane First Nation



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