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## BACKGROUND ON HPV

### According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention

#### What is Genital HPV Infection?

Genital HPV infection is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that is caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). Human papillomavirus is the name of a group of viruses that includes more than 100 different strains or types. More than 30 of these viruses are sexually transmitted, and they can infect the genital area of men and women including the skin of the penis, vulva (area outside the vagina), or anus, and the linings of the vagina, cervix, or rectum. Most people who become infected with HPV will not have any symptoms and will clear the infection on their own.

Some of these viruses are called "high-risk" types, and may cause abnormal Pap tests. They may also lead to cancer of the cervix, vulva, vagina, anus, or penis. Others are called "low-risk" types, and they may cause mild Pap test abnormalities or genital warts.

#### How common is HPV?

Approximately 20 million people are currently infected with HPV. At least 50 percent of sexually active men and women acquire genital HPV infection at some point in their lives. By age 50, at least 80 percent of women will have acquired genital HPV infection. About 6.2 million Americans get a new genital HPV infection each year.

#### How common is HPV and associated conditions in men?

Over half of sexually active men in the United States (U.S.) will have HPV at some time in their lives. About 1% of sexually active men in the U.S. have genital warts at any one time.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates that about 1,530 men will be diagnosed with penile cancer in the U.S. in 2006. ACS estimates that about 1,910 men will be diagnosed with anal cancer in 2006.

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### **How is genital HPV infection diagnosed?**

Most women are diagnosed with HPV on the basis of abnormal Pap tests. No HPV tests are available for men.

### **Is there a cure for HPV?**

There is no "cure" for HPV infection, although in most women the infection goes away on its own. The treatments provided are directed to the changes in the skin or mucous membrane caused by HPV infection, such as warts and pre-cancerous changes in the cervix.

### **What is the connection between HPV infection and cervical cancer?**

All types of HPV can cause mild Pap test abnormalities which do not have serious consequences. Approximately 10 of the 30 identified genital HPV types can lead, to development of cervical cancer. Research has shown that for most women (90 percent), cervical HPV infection becomes undetectable within two years.

A Pap test can detect pre-cancerous and cancerous cells on the cervix. Regular Pap testing and careful medical follow-up, with treatment if necessary, can help ensure that pre-cancerous changes in the cervix caused by HPV infection do not develop into life threatening cervical cancer. For 2004, the American Cancer Society estimates that about 10,520 women will develop invasive cervical cancer and about 3,900 women will die from this disease. Most women who develop invasive cervical cancer have not had regular cervical cancer screening.

### **How can people reduce their risk for genital HPV infection?**

The surest way to eliminate risk for genital HPV infection is to refrain from any genital contact with another individual.

A mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner is the strategy most likely to prevent future genital HPV infections and reducing the number of sexual partners and choosing a partner less likely to be infected may reduce the risk of genital HPV infection. Partners less likely to be infected include those who have had no or few prior sex partners.

HPV infection can occur in both male and female genital areas that are covered or protected by a latex condom, as well as in areas that are not covered.

Please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/> for more information.