

**THE NATUROPATHIC
PERSPECTIVE**
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HPV & CERVICAL CANCER

There has been a recent surge of interest and media coverage on the human papillomavirus (HPV) – a virus that can lead to the development of cervical cancer. Naturopathic medicine seeks to find the underlying cause of disease, and to focus a person's attention on prevention. So when it comes to infectious diseases like HPV, a little education can go a long way. Here are some things you may not have heard...

Genital human papillomavirus (HPV) is a sexually-transmitted disease.

HPV is transmitted from an infected person to their partner via the skin. This means that even if the sexual activity of a couple does not include penetration, the disease can still spread! There are more than 100 different strains of HPV, 30 of which are known to be transmitted sexually.

“Approximately 10 of the 30 identified genital HPV types can lead, in rare cases, to development of cervical cancer.”

– Centers for Disease Control, 2007.

Some strains of HPV contribute to...

- warts: genital, anal, flat, raised and plantar
- cervical *dysplasia* (i.e., an abnormal growth of cells) & cancer
- dysplasia of the vulva and penis

But, not all infected individuals have symptoms!

“Only 1-2% of HPV-infected individuals have any visibly detectable clinical lesion.”

– Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2005.

So, what can you do to reduce the spread of HPV?

- educate yourself and your children about safe sex practices
- ask your medical doctor to screen you for HPV infection if you are sexually active, **even if your activities do not include penetration!**
- partners should talk openly about their infection status and sexual history
- do not share unwashed towels, clothing, etc. with an infected individual

Sources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Genital HPV Infection - CDC Fact Sheet,” <http://www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm> (December 19, 2007).

T. Fitzpatrick, R. Johnson, K. Wolff, & R. Suurmond, Color Atlas & Synopsis of Clinical Dermatology. McGraw-Hill, 2005.