



# HPV-Related Cancers Among Men Who Have Sex With Men: What You Need to Know to Reduce Your Risk

All sexually active people are at risk for infection with Human papillomavirus (HPV) and HPV-related cancers. Men who have sex with men (MSM) can be at high risk for HPV-related anal, oral, and penile cancers. This fact sheet provides information on HPV-related cancers among MSM and how to reduce your risk. If you are a sexually active male who has sex with men you can bring this fact sheet with you the next time you visit your health care provider to discuss ways to reduce your risk for HPV, including getting vaccinated with the HPV vaccine and using condoms.

## What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). Most sexually active people will have one or more HPV infections in their lifetime. The infection is spread primarily through sexual contact, such as anal or vaginal sex and it can also be transmitted by oral sex and other forms of skin-to-skin contact. Although most HPV infections will go away on their own without causing any problems, some strains of the virus can cause genital warts and other strains can lead to cancer.

## HPV: Key facts for MSM

In most cases, people with HPV have no symptoms but they can still pass the virus on to others.

Research suggests that over half of MSM have anal HPV infections and about 17% have an oral HPV infection.

Rates of anal and oral cancer among men have increased in recent years.

HPV rates for MSM do not decrease with age like HPV rates for women do.

## HPV and Genital Warts

Some strains of HPV can lead to genital warts in the anal area or on or around the penis.

The HPV vaccine protects against the strains of HPV that cause 90% of genital warts.

**What are the different types of HPV related cancers that MSM are at risk for?**

**HPV causes:  
90% of anal cancers,  
70% of oral cancers, and  
50% of penile cancers**

## How can I reduce my risk for HPV related cancer?

### Condoms

The consistent and correct use of latex condoms for oral and anal sex can reduce but not completely eliminate your risk of HPV infection.

*Remember: HPV can be transmitted through skin-to-skin contact so condoms may not protect you completely.*

### HPV Vaccine

There is a HPV vaccine available that will protect against the most common HPV strains that cause oral, anal, and penile cancer and genital warts.

Even older men can benefit from HPV vaccination because the vaccine can protect them from strains they have not been exposed to and also prevent reinfection from strains they have already been exposed to.

## Who should I talk to about getting the HPV vaccine?

Talk to your doctor about how to obtain the vaccine, how much it costs, and if you are eligible for funded vaccination.

## HIV Positive men are at increased risk for HPV infection and anal cancer

Some research reports have found that over half of HIV-positive MSM had an HPV anal infection with a HPV type that causes cancer

HIV-positive individuals are 28x more likely than HIV-negative individuals to develop anal cancer



**Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends all MSM get the HPV vaccination**



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