



CANCER & HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS

WHAT IS CANCER?

Cancer is a group of related diseases attributed to the body cells. The body normally have a way of dealing with old or damage cells for them not to divide and/or grow further.

However, some cells will continue to divide without control and grow abnormally. Cancer mainly arise from this type of cells.

During this process, the cells can spread to other part of the body. If this spread is not checked, it could lead to death of the person.

WHAT IS A VIRUS?

A virus is an infectious agent that can only divide in other organisms or its host cell in order to produce other viruses.

WHAT IS HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV)?

Human papilloma virus is mainly a group of related viruses with over 100 varieties. Every HPV virus in this group carries a number that is called its type (HPV type) e.g. HPV 6, 11, 16, 18.

This virus is called HPV because of the **warts** (papillomas) some HPV types can cause. Other HPV types can cause **cancer**.

WHO CAN GET HPV?

Both male and female can get HPV.

HOW DO PEOPLE GET HPV?

HPV is usually transferred or transmitted through contact (skin-to-skin). It can also be transferred from mother to infant during birth. However, the major contact route of this transmission is having sex (vaginal, anal, or oral sex) with the carrier of the virus. Nearly all sexually active persons will get it at some point in their lives.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE HPV?

HPV infection usually produces no symptoms or signs at all. It can be transferred even when the carrier is not showing any symptom, this is so because, the carrier might not develop the symptoms even several years after being infected, hence, the difficulty in knowing when the carrier was first infected. However, the presence of warts or cancer can indicate or point to the presence of HPV.

IS HPV LINKED TO CANCER?

Yes. Cancer occurs when abnormal body cells divide without control. HPV infect body (mostly skin) cells, and in other for the cells to accommodate new virus particle, they divide. Sometimes, this process goes beyond normal.

When we have more cells than the normal, the growth in the skin can lead to warts. For those with high risk of HPV infections, when this process begins to cause damages to the cells, the cells can start growing without control and this can lead to cancer.

Different types of HPV can cause warts and cancer. HPV type 6 and 11 are the most common HPV types related to warts like genital warts. There are about 12 types of HPV that are related to cancer. However, the two most common 'high-risk' types related to cancer are HPV type 16 and 18.

WHAT TYPE OF CANCER IS RELATED TO HPV?

The most common cancer that relate to HPV are; cancer of the cervix, penis, vulva, vagina and anus. Others are cancer of the tongue, throat, tonsils.

HOW CAN I PREVENT HPV AND HPV LINKED CANCER?

Usually, HPV clears from the body, because the body's immune system can take care of it and this will not cause any health challenge. But when the HPV did not go away and is high above what the body system can handle, it can lead to warts and cancer.

Since HPV is usually on the fingers, hands, mouth and genitals, the need for proper hygiene and protected sex could help. There is link between people with high number of sexual partners and increase chance of picking up HPV infection. People with weak immune systems may not be able to overcome HPV and the possibility of developing health challenges related to HPV.

The good news is that; you can get vaccinated to prevent HPV infection and consequently HPV related cancer. This is available through age 26 years if not vaccinated already. But it is usually administered at age 11-13 years or start at age 9 years (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/public/index.html>).

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM SEXUALLY ACTIVE?

Cervical cancer is the most common HPV related cancer and the second most common female cancer diagnosed in Nigeria. It is appropriate when one is sexually active to book an appointment for HPV test and cervical cancer screening. This screening will help to prevent cancer. And if cervical cancer is detected early, it will enhance the chance of survival or outcome.

ARE THERE OTHER THINGS TO DO?

Yes.

- ➔ Do not touch the warts on someone's body
- ➔ If you are aware, do not touch surfaces exposed to HPV

- ➔ Control your tobacco use, alcohol intake, obesity,
- ➔ Control non-modifiable factors, such as aging, sex, hormones, race, inherited genetic mutations, immune conditions
- ➔ Eat healthy (more of a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes)
- ➔ Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day

For more information, comments and questions:
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About DOVE-HAVEN FOUNDATION

Dove-Haven Foundation is a not-for-profit, non-political and non-governmental organisation with the aim of promoting the health and wellbeing of the population by reducing cancer threat. We are working towards reducing cancer prevalence in Nigeria and beyond through cancer prevention, management, research and advocacy activities. Our programs are designed to raise cancer awareness and education in the society; provide easy access to cancer screening, diagnosis, management; and enhance the quality of life of cancer patients.

Motto: ...making others to win, makes you a winner

Vision

A world without cancer threat.

Mission

Our mission is to reduce cancer prevalence in Nigeria and beyond through cancer awareness and education, cancer screening and diagnosis, advocacy activities, resource mobilisation for cancer management, engineering behaviour change, research, system strengthening and support services for cancer activities

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