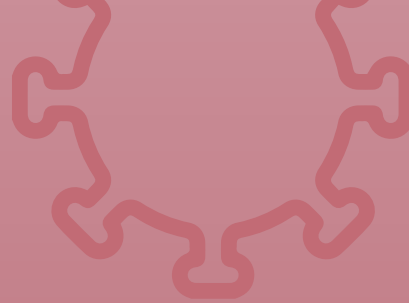


SAMEN  
TEGEN  
HPV.

This brochure explains how  
you can protect yourself from  
**HPV-related diseases**

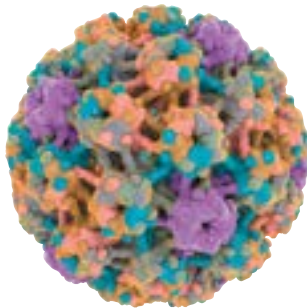




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# HPV STANDS FOR HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS



## 1. What is HPV?

HPV is the abbreviation for **human papillomavirus**. HPV is a highly contagious virus and there are more than 100 different types. Most of these HPV types are harmless. But there are also high-risk HPV types such as 16 and 18 that are less benign and can even cause certain cancers.<sup>1-3</sup>

**Find out more about HPV and how to protect yourself from HPV-related diseases in this leaflet.**

## 2. How do you get HPV?

HPV can infect the cells in your cervix, and cells around the genitals or oral and pharyngeal cavities. You can catch it through sex with someone who is infected. You can get or pass on HPV through vaginal, anal and oral sex. It can also be transmitted through skin-to-skin contact during sex. HPV is highly contagious and can be transmitted very easily from one person to another. A condom reduces your chances of getting HPV. However, you can still get infected if the virus gets onto your fingers or in your mouth.<sup>1,4-6</sup>

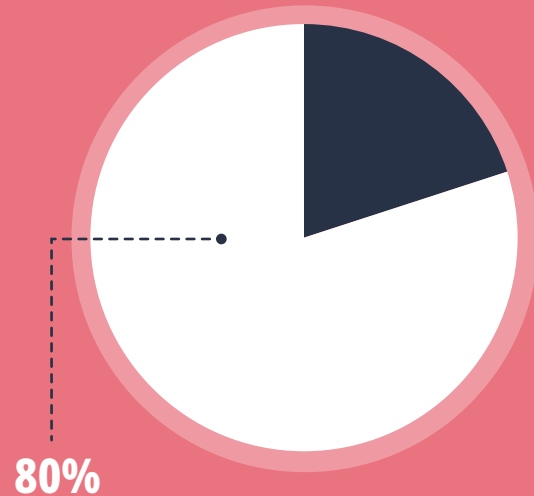
### Is HPV common?

HPV is very common. About 80% of all men and women in the Netherlands who are sexually active become infected with HPV at some point.<sup>1</sup>

### What are the signs of an HPV infection?

If you are infected with HPV, you usually don't notice it. In most cases, the body clears the HPV infection on its own within 2 years. In some cases, however, the body cannot clear the HPV infection. The virus then remains in the cells and abnormal cells may develop.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF YOU GETTING HPV?



About 80% of all men and women in the Netherlands who are sexually active become infected with HPV at some point.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Consequences of HPV

If you don't get rid of HPV and the virus stays in your body, it can cause problems in the short or longer term. What these will be and when they will occur depends on the HPV type. Someone with low-risk HPV types could get genital warts, while high-risk HPV types can cause certain cancers.<sup>7</sup> The most common form of cancer caused by HPV is cervical cancer.<sup>4</sup>

There are other forms of cancer too, including cancer of the mouth and pharynx, cancer of the vagina, cancer of the labia, cancer of the anus and cancer of the penis.<sup>3</sup> (see 'HPV and other cancers' on page 7).

**HPV CAN CAUSE GENITAL WARTS  
AND CERTAIN FORMS OF CANCER .**

Around 80% of sexually active men and women are infected with HPV at some point in their lives



## HPV and cervical cancer

There are some 12 known high-risk HPV types that can cause cervical cancer (and other HPV-related cancers).<sup>7</sup> This does not occur immediately after you get infected with HPV, but is gradual. HPV that is not cleared by the body can become lodged in the cells of the cervix. This may cause abnormalities in the cells. Your body can often clear HPV and the mildly to moderately abnormal cells on its own within 2 years. If it fails to do so, however, these abnormal cells can develop into precursors of cancer. Cervical

cancer can develop in this way after about 15 years.<sup>1</sup>

Less than 1% of women with HPV infection eventually develop cervical cancer.<sup>1</sup> You can significantly reduce your risk with an HPV vaccination, among other things. (see 'Can I prevent HPV?' on page 10).<sup>8</sup>

### Cervical cancer screening

If you are infected with HPV and abnormal cells develop in your cervix, you usually don't notice anything.<sup>1</sup>

That is why all women aged between 30 and 60 are invited to take part in the population screening for cervical cancer. A smear is then taken from the cervix (i.e. cells are collected with a spatula) and examined in the laboratory.

In this way, the early stages of cervical cancer can be detected and treated early. This may prevent cervical cancer.<sup>9</sup>

### Self-collection kit

Do you dislike having a smear test done at your GP's practice? And that is a reason for you not participating in screening? Then request a self-collection kit. The self collection kit allows you to collect your own vaginal material. The laboratory then tests this for HPV.<sup>11</sup>

### HPV and other cancers

HPV can also cause other cancers (in the long term). These include cancer of the anus, throat, mouth, penis, vagina and vulva.<sup>3</sup> This

can cause symptoms such as burning, bleeding, pain and abnormalities.<sup>1</sup>

### HPV and genital warts

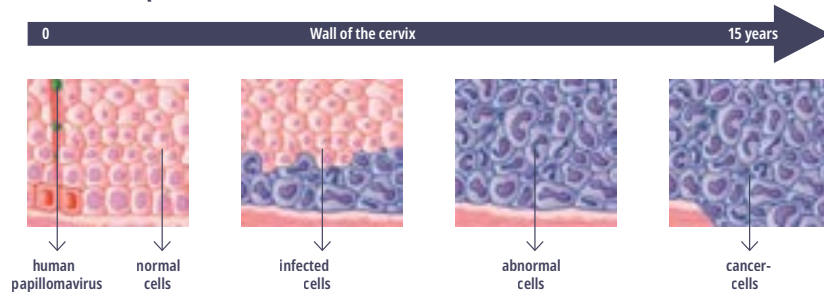
Low-risk HPV types (types 6 and 11) can cause genital warts in both men and women. Genital warts are a sexually transmitted disease (STD) and about 90% of cases are caused by HPV.<sup>4</sup> General practitioners in the Netherlands diagnosed an estimated 45,800 cases of genital warts in 2022. It is slightly more common in men than in women.<sup>12</sup>

In 2021,

# 6,246

persons in the Netherlands were found to have the early signs of cervical cancer.<sup>10</sup>

### The development of cervical cancer<sup>1</sup>



## 4. FACTS AND FIGURES

### Genital warts

One way to catch genital warts is having (vaginal, anal or oral) sex with someone who has genital warts already or is infected with an HPV type that causes genital warts. You can also get infected by touching someone else's genital warts, or using the same towel, for example.<sup>5</sup>

Genital warts occur on and around the penis, vagina or anus. You often see several at the same site, they can look like cauliflowers and are pinkish-red or greyish-white.<sup>12</sup>

Genital warts can cause symptoms such as itching, pain or a burning sensation. They may go away on their own but this can

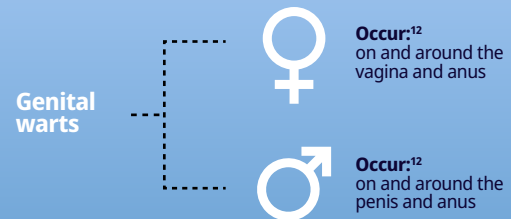
take a long time. Because genital warts are usually caused by HPV and the virus can stay in your body, they can come back. Genital warts can be treated with certain creams. If this does not work, the doctor may dab, burn or cut away the warts. After treatment, the warts can sometimes come back.

If this happens, you can then go to the doctor for new treatment.<sup>12, 16</sup>

"There are still quite a few misconceptions about HPV, and it would be great if these were cleared up."

Coco (35)

**Genital warts in both men and women: 45,800**  
(in 2022)<sup>12</sup>





### HPV-related cancers

There are several types of HPV-related cancer that can occur in both men and women.

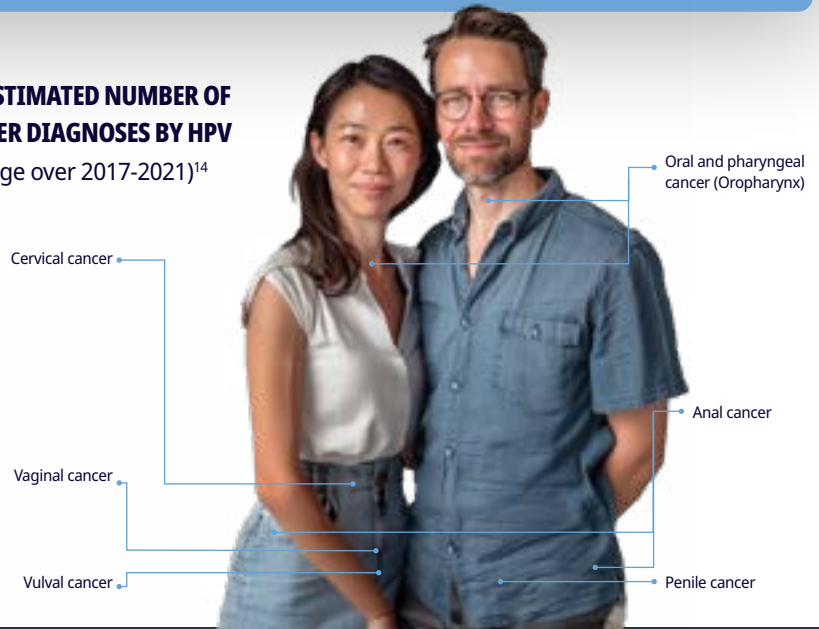
The most common form of HPV-related cancer in women is cervical cancer. The disease mainly affects young women; in the Netherlands, it is the third most common form of

cancer in women aged between 15 and 44. However, HPV can also cause other cancers such as cancers of the pharynx and oral cavity, the vagina, anus and penis.<sup>13</sup>

"If you have symptoms or a sense that you have 'something', please get it checked. Then you will definitely catch it early."

—Shaun (34)

### THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CANCER DIAGNOSES BY HPV (average over 2017-2021)<sup>14</sup>



## 5. Can you prevent HPV-related diseases?

HPV is very common and highly contagious. Participating in cervical cancer screening, using a condom and HPV vaccination can all help protect you from certain cancers caused by HPV.<sup>8</sup>

### **Cervical cancer screening/population screening**

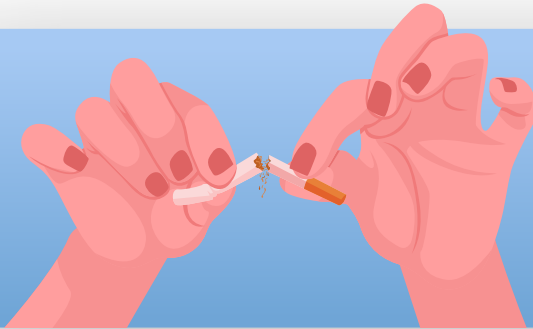
All women aged between 30 and 60 are invited to take part in the population screening for cervical cancer. This programme allows early detection of the preliminary stages of this cancer. As a result, malignancy is usually not advanced and treatment can be initiated at an earlier stage, making it more effective.<sup>9</sup>

### **Condoms**

Using a condom during sex reduces the risk of genital warts but it does not offer full protection. The virus can be transmitted if you come into contact with the skin around the genitals of someone carrying it. So do not touch the warts. You can also get infected with HPV by using the same towel as someone with genital warts.<sup>1,2</sup>

### **Vaccination against HPV**

In the Netherlands, HPV vaccination is included in the National Vaccination Programme. Previously, only girls were called in for a vaccination in the year they turned 13. But boys can contract and



### **Quitting smoking**

Smoking damages your cells, among other things, making your immune system less effective. This makes it harder for your body to clear the virus. Therefore, quitting smoking reduces the risk of HPV infection.<sup>1</sup>

transmit HPV too. It has therefore been decided that from 2022, boys and girls will be called in for a free HPV vaccination in the year they turn 10.

The HPV vaccination included in the National Vaccination Programme in 2022 consists of two vaccinations six months apart.<sup>17</sup>

### **Age and locations - HPV vaccination**

Young people up to the age of 26 who have not yet had the vaccination could receive an HPV vaccination free of charge through the National Vaccination programme in 2022 and 2023.

Different age? Anyone can have a vaccination against HPV outside this programme at their own expense. This can be done at several locations. You can visit your GP and the GGD for this, as well as a private clinic or a vaccination centre.<sup>18</sup>



## 6. Frequently asked questions about HPV and HPV vaccination

### Can you be infected with HPV if you've only had sex once in your life?

Yes, you can. HPV is incredibly contagious. You have a 50% chance of HPV infection if you have had sex once without a condom with someone who has HPV.<sup>1</sup>

### Can you get HPV if you don't go 'all the way' with sex?

Yes, you can. The HPV virus is incredibly contagious. It can be transmitted through body contact before and during sex. You can also contract or spread the virus through your hands.<sup>1,3</sup>

### Is vaccination useful later in life?

Even later in life, when you are sexually active or have already had an HPV infection, vaccination can protect you from HPV-related diseases. Indeed, it is unlikely that all HPV types have already been contracted. In addition, the vaccine may simultaneously protect against the other HPV types. Vaccination cannot treat an existing HPV infection, it is meant to prevent problems.<sup>18,19</sup>

### Can you have sex if you have contracted genital warts?

Genital warts are contagious but not dangerous. You can pass them on through sexual contact. It is therefore advisable to use a condom. Condoms reduce the risk of passing on genital warts, but they do not offer 100% protection. You can also get or pass genital warts via your fingers.<sup>16</sup>

### Is HPV infection always the cause of cervical cancer?

In more than 99% of cases, cervical cancer is caused by infection with HPV.<sup>2</sup>

### **Can you get HPV if you share stuff like a towel?**

Yes, you can. HPV is very contagious and thus easily transmitted, including through use of the same items that come into contact with your skin, genitals or mucous membranes. This only applies to low-risk HPV types.<sup>5</sup>

### **What does HPV vaccination cost?**

All boys and girls are called in for HPV vaccination in the year they turn 10. They fall within the 2022 National Vaccination Programme and, for them, HPV vaccination is free.<sup>17</sup> If you fall outside this age group and want to be vaccinated, you may be charged by your GP or the GGD that administers the vaccination.

Costs may vary depending on the provider. You could check whether your health insurance might cover this.<sup>3</sup>

### **How many injections do you need to be vaccinated against HPV?**

Everyone who gets vaccinated within the National Vaccination Programme receives two injections.<sup>2</sup>

### **Does HPV vaccination have side effects?**

Like any medicine, vaccines can have side effects, although they do not affect everyone. You may experience pain, itching, red skin or swelling at the injection site. You may also experience symptoms

such as headache, fever, dizziness, fatigue or nausea. These side effects are usually mild and go away by themselves.<sup>18</sup>

### **What is the effectiveness of HPV vaccinations?**

HPV vaccinations are around 90% effective against infection with the HPV types contained in a vaccine. All available vaccines protect against the most common high-risk HPV types that can cause cancer.<sup>22</sup>

**The HPV vaccination contains the virus, right? Doesn't it actually give you HPV?**

An HPV vaccine contains harmless particles of HPV types. This is necessary because these harmless particles actually stimulate your body to make antibodies against 'real' HPV types. So HPV vaccination doesn't make you sick; it protects you against HPV.<sup>21</sup>

**When should you not be vaccinated against HPV?**

If you have a fever (38.5°C or more), feel too ill to go outside, are pregnant or have a severe immune system disorder due to illness or medication, it is better not to get an HPV vaccination (at that time).<sup>21</sup>

**Is there any experience with HPV vaccination in other countries?**

There is also a great deal of experience with HPV vaccinations in other countries. In 2019, HPV vaccination was included in the national vaccination programme in 100 countries. An increasing number of countries are also vaccinating boys via the vaccination programme, as is already the case in England, Ireland, Norway, Austria, Australia and Canada.<sup>21</sup>

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### **SamentegenHPV.nl**

Want to know more about HPV,  
protection against HPV  
and where to go?

Scan this QR code and visit  
the website for more information.



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