Human papillomavirus (HPV). The facts.

What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

- HPV is a common virus that 4 out of 5 (80%) of us will get at some time during our lives.
- There are over 200 different types of HPV. Around 40 types affect the genital area:
  - Some do not cause cervical cancer, but can cause skin conditions like genital warts.
  - About 13 types are linked to cancer. These types are called high-risk HPV.

High-risk HPV and cervical cancer

- Almost all cases of cervical cancer (99.7%) are caused by high-risk HPV.
- A persistent high-risk HPV infection can cause the cells of the cervix to change. These changes are called abnormalities. If abnormalities get worse, they may develop into cervical cancer.
- As well as cervical cancer, high-risk HPV can cause other cancers, including anal, vulval, vaginal, and some head and neck cancers.

We have lots more information and support on HPV, cervical screening, cervical abnormalities and cervical cancer, including:

- our website with up-to-date information written and reviewed by experts – visit jostrust.org.uk
- an online Ask The Expert service, where you can submit any questions
- an online forum to share your experiences
- a dedicated Helpline on 0808 802 8000
- a wide range of information resources, like the one you are reading.
Reduce your risk of a persistent HPV infection

- **Stop smoking.** Smoking weakens your immune system, making it less able to get rid of HPV.

- **Have safe sex.** Using condoms and dental dams help reduce your risk, but HPV lives on the skin in the whole genital area, not just the part you cover.

- **Have the HPV vaccine.** If you are eligible, the HPV vaccine protects against high-risk HPV 16 and 18 that cause 70% of all cervical cancers and low-risk HPV 6 and 11 that cause 90% of genital warts.

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