

Health Hints

Alarming Statistics Of A Common Virus

(NAPSA)—According to a recent study, more than 70 percent of Americans, 18 and older, have never heard of human papillomavirus (HPV)—even though 5.5 million people are diagnosed with this virus every year.

Although most people have heard of common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as herpes and chlamydia, many people do not know about HPV. Certain strains of HPV can cause genital warts and cervical cancer.

According to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, as many as 24 million Americans are infected with HPV and an estimated one million new cases of genital warts are diagnosed every year.

HPV is one of the most common and fastest-spreading STDs in America, putting those who are sexually active at great risk for serious complications.

The virus often produces no symptoms and can remain dormant for months or years, then later be transmitted to another sexual partner.

“If you’re sexually active, you are at risk for contracting HPV, genital warts or any other STD,” said Dr. Patti Jayne Ross, MD, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Texas-Houston Medical School. “Don’t be a statistic. Unprotected sex can lead to STD infections and any intimate contact can lead to HPV infection.”

Genital warts often appear as small bumps or growths, but can appear as groups of warts and can



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grow quite large, if left untreated.

Limiting the number of partners can help reduce exposure. Condoms, when used correctly, provide some protection against HPV and genital warts, but because a condom can only protect the area covered, infection is not entirely prevented by condoms.

HPV can only be diagnosed by a healthcare provider. For women, this usually occurs during an annual Pap smear. While there is no cure for HPV, there are treatments available that can eliminate visible warts. Traditional treatments include chemical removal, freezing or laser surgery.

However, there are now topical treatments, such as Aldara™ (imiquimod) cream, 5%, that patients can use in the privacy of their own homes. These treatments may be less traumatic to patients, many of whom may be too embarrassed to seek treatment.

For more information, call 1-866-799-INFO or visit www.aldara.com.