Can HPV cause other health problems?

- High-risk types of HPV are also associated with cancers of the vagina, vulva, anus and penis, as well as some head and neck cancers. The link between HPV and these types of cancer is still being studied.
- “Low-risk” types of HPV may cause genital warts. These can be treated.

How do you get HPV?

- HPV is spread through intimate (genital) skin-to-skin contact, usually during sexual intercourse.
- Your chance of getting HPV increases if you have more than one sexual partner. But you can get the virus from just one person.
- The virus can “hide” in your cervix for months or years before it causes abnormal cell changes. Therefore, it is impossible to know for certain when and from whom you got an HPV infection.

How do you know if you have HPV?

- High-risk types of HPV do not cause any symptoms. You can have HPV and not know it.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a high-risk HPV test for women that can be done with a Pap.
- The digene HPV Test determines whether you have one or more of 13 types of HPV that may lead to cervical cancer.
- Although HPV itself cannot be treated, knowing you have HPV tells your doctor or nurse to monitor you more closely.
- There currently is no FDA-approved HPV test for men.

What is HPV?

- HPV stands for “human papillomavirus.”
- HPV is a very common virus. In fact, it’s estimated that 8 out of every 10 women get HPV by the age of 50.
- Men also can get HPV. However, it is rare for HPV to cause serious problems in men.

How is HPV linked to cervical cancer?

- Certain “high-risk” types of HPV cause cervical cancer.
- For most women, HPV goes away before it causes any problems. For some women, however, the infection persists.
- When the infection doesn’t go away, abnormal cells may form on the cervix.
- Abnormal cells can develop into cervical cancer if they are not detected and treated early.
Which test should you get and when?

Women 30 and older

- Cervical cancer most often develops in women 30 and older, because HPV infections in these women are more likely to be long-lasting.
- Cervical cancer screening guidelines recommend that every woman age 30 or older get the HPV test along with her Pap.
- If your Pap is normal but your HPV test indicates you have high-risk HPV, it’s a warning that you may be at risk of developing cervical disease.
- When the Pap and HPV tests are done together on a regular basis, cervical cancer can nearly always be prevented.

Women younger than 30

- All women should begin getting a Pap test three years after first sexual intercourse or at the age of 21 – whichever comes first.
- Routine HPV testing isn’t necessary at this age, because HPV infections in younger women usually go away on their own without causing problems.
- Women age 21 and older should have an HPV test when their Pap results are unclear. Your doctor or nurse may describe this kind of Pap as ASC-US – atypical squamous cells of undetermined significance.

What is an HPV test?

- The HPV test looks for the virus that causes cervical cancer.
- The sample of cells is sent to a lab, where advanced molecular technology is used to detect high-risk types of HPV.
- The digene HPV Test is the only HPV test approved by the FDA to be used with the Pap for routine cervical cancer screening of women 30 and older.
- The HPV test plus Pap lets you and your healthcare provider know if you are at risk for cervical cancer and need additional exams.

Can the HPV vaccine prevent infection?

- The HPV vaccine protects against two types of HPV that cause 70 percent of cervical cancers.
- The first HPV vaccine was approved by the FDA in June 2006 for girls and young women age 9-26. It is most effective for girls and women who have not been exposed to the two types of HPV that the vaccine protects against.
- The vaccine is not a cure for existing infections. Women should be screened regularly with the Pap and [if 30 or older] the HPV test, even if they have been vaccinated. Ask your doctor or nurse about the tests and the schedule that are best for you.

Will insurance pay for the HPV test?

- Nearly all insurance plans pay for the HPV test.
- The QIAGEN Benefits Hotline can help you determine if your health plan covers the HPV test. Call 866-895-1HPV (866-895-1478). Please have your insurance company’s name and group number available when calling.

How can cervical cancer be prevented?

- There are two tests that can protect you from cervical cancer: A Pap test and an HPV test.
- To perform these tests, a doctor or nurse collects a sample of cells from your cervix during your gynecologic exam.

What is a Pap test?

- A Pap test looks for abnormal cells in the cervix that are caused by HPV.
- The sample of cervical cells is sent to a lab, where it is examined under a microscope for signs of abnormal changes.