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Article about HPV for Lifestyle Magazine

Need a New Year's Resolution? Resolve to Get a Pap Test.

HPV What? Human papillomavirus (HPV) causes cancer and genital warts. Genital warts are not fun, but they're usually only inconvenient. But cervical cancer can kill you. And both of them are considered sexually transmitted diseases. On the list of uncomfortable topics, Pap tests, HPV and cervical cancer are probably at the top. Most women don't rush in the door after their annual gynecologic exam to call their friends and talk about it. And if the results of the Pap test aren't normal, many women are too embarrassed to tell anyone – especially if they have HPV.

But talking about it is good. And you might find that some of your friends welcome the conversation. Some experts estimate that 80% of all women will contract HPV in their lifetime. If that's true, 8 out of 10 of your friends will deal with HPV too.

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1. Get a Pap test every year unless your doctor tells you otherwise
 - Certain strains of HPV can cause cancer, and Pap tests are the most effective way to find pre-cancerous cervical dysplasia before it develops into cancer
2. Use condoms if you're sexually active
 - Though condoms will not prevent transfer of HPV every time, they do help protect women and men from contracting the virus
3. Get the HPV vaccine if you're under the age of 27
 - A vaccine has been developed to prevent HPV, and, in turn, cervical cancer and most genital warts.
 - The CDC's Advisory Committee recommends that girls be vaccinated at age 11 or 12, but girls as young as 9 and women as old as 26 may be able to receive the vaccine