

Inclusive HPV Conversations with 2SLGBTQI+ communities

As a healthcare provider, you play a key role in protecting against human papillomavirus (HPV). Staying informed about HPV vaccination and having open, inclusive conversations about sexual health helps reduce HPV-related cancer risk and supports all patients in making informed decisions.

Why inclusive conversations matter?

Provider recommendation is one of the strongest predictors of HPV vaccination. **But only when patients feel safe enough to engage.** Inclusive conversations increase trust, disclosure, and engagement in healthcare—including vaccine uptake.



How you can make a difference

- ✓ Know about HPV, cancer risk, and recommend vaccination
- ✓ Avoid assumptions about anatomy, partners, or sexual practices
- ✓ Reduce stigma by framing HPV as common and relevant across genders and sexualities
- ✓ Encourage regular cancer screening, safer sex practices, and routine STI testing

HPV facts

- HPV is very common and can affect people of all genders and sexual orientations
- Most people who contract HPV do not have symptoms
- HPV spreads through skin-to-skin sexual contact, including oral, anal, genital, and shared sex toys
- Risk is not determined by identity, number of partners, or types of sex
- The vaccine is most effective when given before people become sexually active

▶ HPV affects more than the cervix

HPV can increase the risk of several cancers, including almost 100% of cervical cancers,¹ and:

90% of anal cancers

60%-73% of oropharyngeal cancers

40% of vaginal cancers

40%-50% of penile cancers

References:

1. Public Health Agency of Canada. (n.d.). Human papillomavirus (HPV): For health professionals. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/human-papillomavirus-hpv/health-professionals.html>

▶ Ask non-assumptive questions

When providers avoid assumptions, patients are more likely to feel seen and to engage in honest conversation. This improves sexual history-taking and opens the door to meaningful HPV prevention discussions.

Ask about anatomy and sex using neutral phrasing, normalize HPV as a common experience, and proactively recommend vaccination when patients are eligible or unvaccinated.

▶ Focus on protection

- **HPV protection is layered:** Vaccination, screening, and safer sex practices all play a role
- **Vaccination protects against warts and cancer-causing HPV strains**
- **HPV screening supports early detection,** particularly for people with a cervix

“ What kind of sex do you have, if any? This helps me give accurate information.

“ What anatomy is involved in your sexual activity? Partners with penises, vaginas, both, or other anatomy?

“ HPV is very common. Most people will have it at some point, often without knowing.

“ If you haven't had the HPV vaccine, it's not too late to get it.

Short-term impacts

Cancer prevention motivates many, but for others, immediate impact matters. Consider noting that HPV can cause genital warts for those less focused on long-term cancer risk.

How you can help

✓ Encourage people to access the HPV vaccine for free

In Alberta, the vaccine is free for anyone 26 and under

✓ Encourage people who are ineligible to explore options for vaccination

For people over the age of 26, some private insurance plans may cover part or all of the cost of the HPV vaccine. Encourage individuals to check their coverage. Those without coverage may need to pay out of pocket.

In some cases, the HPV vaccine may also be publicly covered for people with a condition that affects the immune system.

Learn more



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This resource was developed in partnership with:

