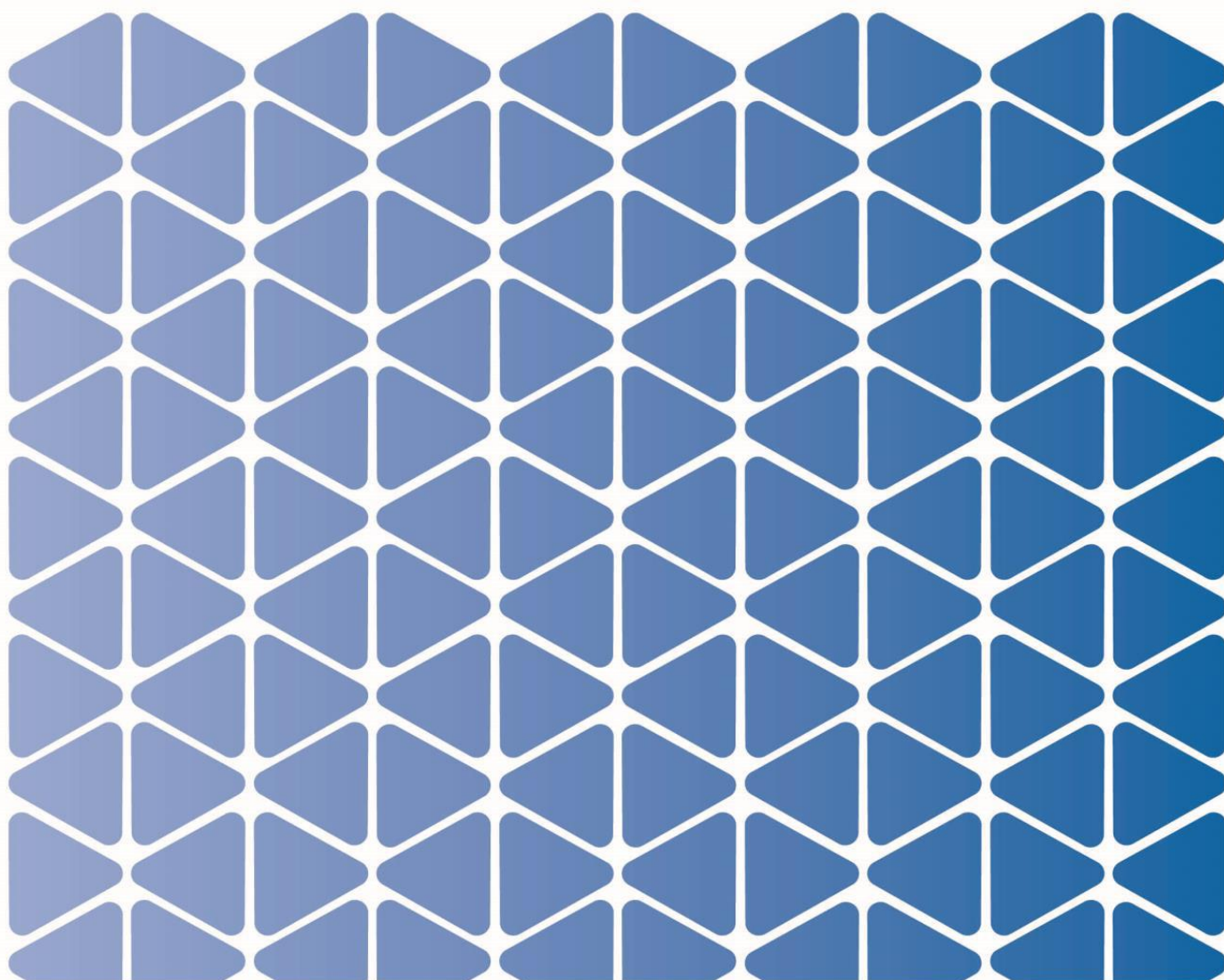


## PATIENT INFORMATION

# HPV (HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS)



## **What is HPV?**

HPV is the name of a common virus.

HPV is usually passed on through skin to skin contact. On the cervix it tends to be through sexual contact, which can make some people feel worried or embarrassed. Because HPV lives on our skin, it is easy to get and difficult to completely protect against. At some point during our lives, 8 in 10 people will get HPV. In most cases, your immune system will get rid of HPV without it causing any problems.

## **How do people get HPV?**

HPV is a common virus that people usually get through skin-to-skin contact.

## **What are the different types of HPV?**

We know of over 200 types of HPV. Each type has a number and different types affect different parts of the body.

HPV types are usually split into:

- low-risk HPV
- high-risk HPV

Low-risk HPV may not cause any problems or cause minor conditions like warts on your hands, verruca's on your feet, and genital warts. Most HPV types are low risk.

## **High Risk HPV**

There are about 13 HPV types which are classed as high risk.

Having high-risk HPV does not mean you will get cancer. Like other HPV types, in most people high-risk HPV goes away without causing any problems.

## **How do I get rid of HPV?**

There is no treatment for HPV. Instead, your immune system will usually get rid of HPV before it causes any problems. In fact, 9 in 10 people get rid of HPV within 2 years.

## **How do I reduce my risk of HPV?**

You can't completely protect against HPV. But there are ways you can reduce your risk of getting HPV or developing a persistent infection that your immune system can't get rid of, in particular by stopping smoking.

## **Smoking and HPV**

In the UK, about 2 in 10 cervical cancers are linked to smoking tobacco. Smoking can make your immune system weaker, which means it is less likely to protect against disease and infection.

## **Who did I get HPV from?**

You can have HPV for a long time without knowing about it, so it is difficult to know when you got HPV or who you got it from.

## **HPV in long-term relationships**

If you have been with a long-term partner, you may worry that having HPV means they have been unfaithful. This is not true. Although your immune system usually gets rid of HPV, it can sometimes stay in your body without causing any problems or being detected with a test. This is called dormant or clinically insignificant HPV.

Sometimes dormant HPV can become active again, which means it can be detected with a test and may start causing cervical cell changes. We don't know why HPV becomes active again.

Because HPV can stay dormant in your body without being detected, it is possible that you got the virus many years – even decades – ago but never knew you had it.

## **Contact details**

If you have any specific concerns that you feel have not been answered and need explaining, please contact the following.

- Sister Jo Underhill, Colposcopy Clinic, Alexandra Hospital (phone 01527 505739)
- Sister Debbie Wise, Kidderminster Hospital (phone 01527 505762)
- Sister Julie Brassington, Worcestershire Royal Hospital (phone 01527 512003)

## **Other information**

The following internet websites contain information that you may find useful.

- [www.worcsacute.nhs.uk](http://www.worcsacute.nhs.uk)  
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
- [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)  
Information fact sheets on health and disease
- [www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk)  
Information leaflets by the Royal College of Anaesthetists about 'Having an anaesthetic'
- [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)  
On-line health encyclopaedia

**If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.**

### **Patient Experience**

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

### **Feedback**

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

### **How to contact PALS:**

**Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: [wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net)**

### **Opening times:**

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.