

# The Other Killer STD

by Colleen Easter

Human papillomavirus, HPV, seems to be a well kept secret. This sexually transmitted virus, long overshadowed by AIDS, has infected millions of people, yet it remains relatively unknown. However, this disease should be getting the attention it deserves because there are links between HPV and cervical cancer.

HPV is more commonly known as the wart virus because HPV infection causes genital warts. Ordinary genital warts, tiny bumps which are noticeable by inspection, are not the only kind possible. There are also flat warts which are not visible to the naked eye. This means a person can have genital warts and never be aware of it. Or person can have no warts and still be infected with HPV.

The possibility of a sexually active person having HPV is very high. At least 500,000 new cases of genital warts are reported every year in North America. When scientists factor in people with no outward signs of the virus, they estimate 10% of sexually active people in North America are infected with HPV. This is over fifteen million people, and makes HPV the most wide spread sexually transmitted virus, well above AIDS.

All people with HPV, visible signs of infection or not, are able to transmit the virus. Studies show that 70% of the sexual partners of infected people are also infected with HPV. This is not a difficult infection to catch. Only a latex condom can control the spread of this disease.

People have been considering that cervical cancer could be sexually transmitted for over a hundred years. Before the turn of the century it was noticed that nuns and virgins were not getting this disease. Women whose husbands travelled, which enabled promiscuity on both

sides, were much more likely to get cervical cancer. Also, when a mans first wife died of cervical cancer, it was quite likely that his second wife would also get the disease.

A recent study has brought these age old findings into the realm of scientific study. The international study, led by Michele Manos of the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, examined 1000 women with cervical cancer. The tumours of these women were searched for signs of HPV. In 95% of these women HPV DNA was found. This means that 95% of the women with cervical cancer were infected with HPV.

This study certainly does not show that HPV is the only factor involved in contracting cervical cancer. If a person is not infected with HPV they can still get cervical cancer. Smoking, taking birth control pills, and the presence of other venereal infections are all believed to contribute to a womans chances of contracting cervical cancer.

If a person does have HPV, that does not mean they will get cervical cancer. There are over 50 different strains of HPV. This study showed that two specific strains are predominately linked with cervical cancer, HPV-16 and HPV-18. Women infected with other strains have little reason to worry about an increased likelihood of getting cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer kills thousands of women every year. Millions of women have increased their chances of dying of cervical cancer by being infected with HPV. The only way you can be sure you have HPV is to go to the doctor. All doctors at the Heath Center on campus check for HPV during a Pap smear. Women who know they are infected with HPV are more aware of their risks for cervical cancer. The awareness of the risks is the first step in early

detection of cancer.

These tests are particularly important for younger women. Another study conservatively estimates that 15% of all sexually active teenage girls are infected with HPV. Up to 60% of these girls could have a strain of the virus linked to cervical cancer. This is because a teenager has a much more immature and vulnerable cervix. So all sexually active women, no matter how young, need to see their doctor and get a Pap smear on a regular basis. They also need to always use a condom or run the risk of catching this and other STD's.



## CONDOM PRICES IN CHARLOTTETOWN

Sherwood Drugmart, ARP  
Shoppers Drugmart, Charlottetown Mall  
Pharma Save, Ellis Brothers Mall  
West Royalty Pharmacy  
K-Mart Pharmacy

Regular Prices, as seen February 1, 1996. All prices are for boxes of 12.

SHEIK	ARP	SHOPPERS	PS	WEST R.	K-MART
Excita (Ribbed, 8% Spermicide)	\$7.95	\$10.29	\$8.99	\$8.99	N/A
Sensi-Creme (Lubricated)	\$3.99	\$7.29	\$6.49	\$5.49	\$6.69
Sensi-Thin (Lubricated)	\$6.99	\$8.49	\$7.79	\$6.49	\$6.69
Elite (8% Spermicide)	\$7.39	\$8.59	\$8.69	\$8.49	\$7.79
Non Lubricated	\$5.59	\$7.29	\$6.49	\$5.49	N/A
<b>RAMSES</b>					
Ribbed (8% Spermicide)	\$10.19	\$11.29	\$10.99	N/A	N/A
Sensitol (Lubricated)	\$8.99	\$8.59	\$7.79	\$6.49	\$8.99
Thin (Lubricated)	\$9.99	\$9.19	\$9.99	\$7.99	\$9.99
Extra (8% Spermicide)	\$10.99	\$11.29	\$10.99	\$9.99	\$10.29
Non Lubricated	\$9.99	\$8.59	\$7.79	\$6.49	N/A
<b>TROJAN-ENZ</b>					
Ultra Texture (5% Spermicide)	\$8.29	\$9.19	N/A	\$6.69	\$6.69
Lubricated	\$5.75	\$6.59	N/A	\$5.99	\$5.79
Thin	\$6.25	\$7.89	N/A	\$6.99	\$6.49
Spermicide 5%	\$7.99	\$8.79	N/A	N/A	\$7.49
Non Lubricated	\$5.79	\$6.39	N/A	\$5.89	\$5.49
<b>ORTHO SHIELDS</b>					
Supreme (Sensitive)	\$7.99	\$9.29	N/A	\$9.99	\$7.99
Lubricated	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$9.99	\$7.49
Thin	N/A	\$9.29	\$8.99	\$7.99	\$8.79
Plus (5% Spermicide)	N/A	\$9.29	\$9.29	\$7.99	\$8.29
Non Lubricated	N/A	\$8.29	N/A	\$7.99	N/A