

# Family Education Trust

(Family and Youth Concern)

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## **Changes in sexual behaviour hold the key to preventing HPV transmission, according to new health education leaflet from the Family Education Trust**

### **Media information: embargo 00.01 on 5 June 2007**

Human papillomavirus (HPV) was once relatively unknown, but as a result of a vaccine becoming available, the profile of this highly infectious and very important sexually transmitted infection has increased rapidly over the past year.

HPV is the cause of almost all cases of cervical cancer, with just two types of the virus causing around 70 per cent of cases. It also causes genital warts which are difficult to treat and can recur even after treatment.

A new health education leaflet published today by the Family Education Trust answers in clear easy to understand language, the most common questions about the HPV virus. It emphasises that the greatest risk is in having sex with partners who have had previous sexual experience and are therefore possible sources of infection even if condoms are used.

The leaflet, *HPV and You*, intended for use in GPs' surgeries and sexual health clinics notes that:

*Changing patterns of sexual behaviour have led to over a third of sexually active people becoming infected with HPV within two years of first sexual intercourse. This figure rises to over a half within four years. Unless there is a reversal of current trends in sexual behaviour, around 70-80 per cent of sexually active people will be infected with HPV at some time in their lives.*

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While advocates of 'safer sex' continue to promote the condom as the sole solution to STI transmission, the leaflet points out that:

*Unlike HIV and many other STIs, HPV is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact as well as by contact with body fluids infected with the virus. This means that the effectiveness of condoms in preventing transmission is limited.*

It warns that:

*While condoms appear to offer some reduction in the risk of getting genital warts and cancer of the cervix, even correct and consistent condom use does not offer good protection against HPV transmission, especially from females to males. This means that if you engage in sexual activity outside the context of a faithful, lifelong relationship, you are highly likely to become infected, even if you use condoms.*

While the new vaccine promises to offer protection for women against the most common types of HPV, the leaflet emphasises that

*The surest way of preventing the spread of HPV is to abstain from sex or to have one committed, faithful, uninfected life-long sexual partner.*

## **ENDS**

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*'HPV and You' is available from Family Education Trust at the following prices:*

*10 copies - £2.25 (inc p&p)*

*25 copies - £4.00 (inc p&p)*

*50 copies - £6.50 (inc p&p)*

*100 copies - £12.50 (inc p&p)*

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### For further information:

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Family Education Trust is an educational charity committed to promoting stable family life and the welfare of children and young people.

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