

Genital Warts

Genital Warts (also known as condyloma) is a **Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)** caused by the **human papillomavirus (HPV)**. There are at least 30 different types of sexually transmitted HPV. Some types may cause wart-like bumps to form on the penis, in and around the vagina, and on the cervix and anus. Other types can cause abnormal cells in the cervix or anus that can be detected on a “pap smear.” **HPV** is passed from one person to another during oral, anal or vaginal sex. There are now FDA-approved vaccines for **HPV** that may protect you against infection.

How do I know if I have Genital Warts or HPV?

- Not everyone with the wart virus will have visible warts. Warts may appear as wart-like growths or may be flat and only slightly raised from the skin. These are not the same warts commonly found on hands and feet.
- Women may find out they have HPV if it causes abnormal cells on their “Pap smear”. Some clinics have ways of testing patients for HPV but these tests are not available at City Clinic.

How are Genital Warts spread?

HPV is passed with skin to skin contact during sex. People that have had unprotected sex with more than two partners in their life have probably already been exposed to the wart virus. Most sexually active people will get HPV at some point in their lives, though most will never know it because the infection has no signs or symptoms. It’s possible to have been exposed to HPV months or years before warts appear. Condoms may lower the chances of giving or getting HPV but are not fully protective because HPV can infect areas that are not covered by a condom.

Are Genital Warts serious?

For most people warts are only a bother, and are treated only for cosmetic reasons. There are many different types of HPV. There are some other types of HPV which can cause changes in the cells of the cervix or the cells of the anus that eventually lead to cancer. **The strain of HPV that causes warts is not the same strain linked to cancer.** There are many treatments available if this develops.

How are Genital Warts treated?

There are several different chemicals (treatments) that can be used to remove the warts. Some of these are available for home use; ask your clinician if these are right for you. It often takes several treatments for the warts to go away. Talk to your clinician if you have been told you have wart virus on the cervix - there are special treatments available for this. You may also want to talk to your clinician about evaluation and experimental treatments that are now being offered in some settings for anal warts.

Will the Warts come back?

Warts may return, even after treatment because the virus stays in the skin once you are infected. You can pass the virus to your sex partners during oral, vaginal or anal sex, even when you don’t have visible warts. If your warts are not gone after your treatment today, you may return every 3 weeks for more treatment

until they are gone. Your immune system is capable of clearing the infection on its own.

Should I tell a sex partner?

People that have had unprotected sex with more than two sex partners in their life have probably already been exposed to the wart virus. It is very common. Your current partner can have a check-up for warts and other STDs, but often warts are not found. It's up to you whether or not to tell a new sex partner that you have the wart virus.

Do I need a Pap Test?

All women starting at age 21 need to have a Pap Test. If your last Pap test was normal, you do not need another one for 3 years. If it was abnormal, talk to your provider about what needs to happen next. Having genital warts or a partner with warts does not necessarily mean you need to get a Pap Test. HPV testing is not necessary if your partner has genital warts.

How can I avoid getting Genital Warts?

- Using condoms 100% does reduce your risk of getting warts, but not completely because the wart virus can be on the skin near the vagina, rectum, penis or testicles and not just on the area covered by the condom.
- Warts and the virus that causes them are generally not dangerous and are very common in the population of sexually active people.
- Women are advised to have a "Pap test" every three years and talk with their clinician about whether other STD testing is needed.
- There is an HPV vaccine recommended for women and men ages 9-26 that may be effective at preventing warts and the early changes of cervical and anal cancer.
- Please read our information sheet on the Pelvic Exam and Pap Test for more information on HPV.

For more information:

Please talk with your City Clinic clinician or your own health care provider. The following websites also offer helpful information:

General STD

www.ashsexualhealth.org (also in Espanol)
www.cdc.gov/std/
www.sfcityclinic.org
www.sfsi.org/

Teens

www.iwannaknow.org
www.amplifyyourvoice.org (also in Espanol)
www.kidshealth.org/teen (also in Espanol)
www.scarleteen.com

Contraception and STD/sex info

www.bedsider.org

For a STD check-up or treatment,
see your doctor, local clinic, or come to:



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