

Genital Warts

Genital Warts (also known as condyloma) are 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 bumps to form on the penis or in and around the vagina, cervix, or anus. Other types can cause abnormal cells in the cervix or anus that can be detected during a Pap test. 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.

- Not everyone with the wart virus will have visible warts. Warts may appear as bumps or may be flat and only slightly raised from the skin. These are not the same warts commonly found on hands and feet.
- People with a cervix may find out they have HPV as part of their Pap test.

HPV is passed through skin to skin contact during sex. Most sexually active people will get HPV at some point in their lives, though most will never know it because they may never develop symptoms from the infection. It's possible to have been infected with HPV months or years before warts appear. Condoms lower the risk of transmitting HPV but not completely because HPV can be present in areas that are not covered by a condom. You can pass the virus to your sex partners even when you don't have visible warts.

For most people, warts are bothersome but not serious, and are treated only for cosmetic reasons. **The strains of HPV that cause warts are not the same strains linked to cancer.**

There are several different ways to treat 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 HPV on the cervix - there are special treatments available for this.

Warts may return even after treatment because the virus can stay in the skin for a while. 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.

HPV is very common. If you currently have warts, it is recommended you tell your sex partner(s). It is up to you whether or not you tell a new sex partner that you have had warts in the past, understanding that they have likely been exposed to the virus in the past with other partners as well.

All people with a cervix starting at age 21 need to have a Pap test. If your last Pap test was normal, you generally do not need another one for 3-5 years, depending on your age and the previous testing that was done. If you have had an abnormal Pap, 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.

- 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 in areas not covered by a condom.
- Warts and the HPV types that cause them are generally not dangerous and are very common in sexually active people.
- There is an HPV vaccine recommended for those ages 9-26 that is effective at preventing warts and cervical cancer. At City Clinic, we have this vaccine for uninsured people through age 26 and for some patients through age 45 based on a conversation between the patient and clinician.
- 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 STI

www.ashasexualhealth.org (also in Español)
www.cdc.gov/std/
www.kidshealth.org/teen (also in Español)
www.scarleteen.com

Teens

www.iwannaknow.org
www.sfcityclinic.org
www.sfsi.org/

Contraception and STI/sex info

www.bedsider.org

For a STI check-up or treatment,
see your health care provider, local clinic, or come to:



A landmark in prevention

City Clinic
356 7th Street
(between Folsom and Harrison)
San Francisco, CA 94103
(628) 217-6600

www.sfcityclinic.org