

You might be confused, angry or sad because warts are so hard to treat. Keep taking your treatment. Talk to your health care provider. They will help you until your warts are under control.

### What About My Partner?

It is very common for both sexual partners to have genital warts.

Your partner should be examined and treated so that you do not pass the infection back and forth.

### Can I Still Have Sex?

Talk to your health care provider about when you can have sex after treatment.

Whenever you do have sex be sure to *always use a latex or polyurethane condom* so you do not get infected again.

### Are Genital Warts and HPV Dangerous?

Sometimes genital warts and HPV can cause other health problems.

#### *Cancer of the Cervix*

The virus that causes genital warts (HPV) can result in changes in the cells lining the cervix that can lead to cancer. This does not mean everyone who has warts will get cancer. It is important to have regularly scheduled Pap tests in order to detect any cell changes early.

#### *Pregnancy Problems*

Sometimes genital warts can grow so fast that they can block the birth canal. This is very rare. Your doctor may have to deliver your baby by cesarean section (C-section).

Sometimes the warts also can infect the baby's throat and make it difficult for the baby to breathe. This is also very rare.

### How Can I Protect Myself?

- Get a Pap test beginning at age 21, and as often as advised to by your health care provider.
- Limit the number of people you have sex with. The more people you have sex with, the more likely it is that you will get HPV and genital warts.
- *Use a latex or polyurethane condom* whenever you have intercourse or other sexual contact.
- If you are from 9-26 years of age, get vaccinated. HPV vaccines are safe and effective and can be given to both men and women.
- See your health care provider as soon as you notice any signs of genital warts. Tell your doctor or nurse if you are pregnant.

If you have any problems or questions, call your health department or health care provider.



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# Genital Warts

## and the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)



## What Are Genital Warts and the Human Papilloma Virus?

There are about 100 types of papilloma viruses that cause warts in people. Thirty of these types are spread sexually. Ten types are "high-risk" and can cause abnormal Pap test results. Others are called "low-risk" and cause mild Pap test abnormalities or genital warts. Genital warts are different from the warts you get on your hands and feet. They used to be called venereal warts or condyloma acuminata. The Human Papilloma (PAP uh LO mah) Virus (HPV) causes genital warts.

HPV can also produce changes in the cells of the cervix (the opening to the uterus or womb) that may lead to other health problems.

It is possible to have HPV but not have any warts. However, the virus can still cause changes in the cells of your cervix that may result in health problems.

## How Do I Get Genital Warts?

Having:

- skin-to-skin contact in the genital area;
- intercourse;
- oral sexual contact; or
- anal sexual contact with someone who has HPV. This is a common sexually transmitted infection.

## What Are the Symptoms of Genital Warts?

Genital warts may appear within several weeks after contact with someone who has the infection, or it may take several months or years to appear. Also, warts may never appear, making it hard to know when or from whom you got the virus.

In **women**, they can occur in the vagina or in the area between the opening of the vagina and the anus. In **men**, they occur on the scrotum, the penis or in the opening of the penis, where they are difficult to see. Warts can also appear in the mouth or around the anus in both men and women.

### *Symptoms in Women and Men*

Genital warts can look different depending on where they grow:

- Small, dry painless growth.
- May look like small clumps of cauliflower.
- May look like hemorrhoids, if they grow around the anus.
- Pink, red or flesh-colored, depending on where they grow.
- Raised or flat, single or multiple, small or large.

### *Other Symptoms in Women*

- Itching in or around the vagina

In most cases, the warts may disappear on their own, but the virus that leads to serious health problems may still be in the body.

### *If You Have These Symptoms*

If you have any of the above symptoms, see your health care provider. They will want to look at the genital area and, if you are a woman, examine your vagina. A Pap smear can show infection with HPV on your cervix.

## How Are Genital Warts Treated?

Genital warts can be treated four different ways:

- **Medicine:** Several medicines can be prescribed by your health care provider for you to apply to the warts yourself. These are called imiquimod (Aldoe) and podofilox (Condyler). Be sure to follow the instructions exactly.
- **Freezing:** A very cold liquid is used to freeze off the warts. This usually does not hurt.
- **Laser Therapy:** A high-intensity light is used to burn off warts. This usually does not hurt.
- **Electrocautery:** An electric needle is used to burn off warts. A medicine is put on your skin to numb the area so that this treatment usually does not hurt.

Do *not* use drugstore medicines for warts. They are not helpful in treating genital warts. They will not work and may cause harm.

Your health care provider will decide which treatment is best for you. Be sure to follow all the directions you are given.

## What If My Infection Keeps Coming Back?

Genital warts may be hard to treat. It can take a long time for them to disappear. Sometimes they will come back and need to be treated again. That is because the virus that causes genital warts may stay in your body, even after they are treated.