

Genital Warts



Genital Warts are also called condyloma or venereal warts and are caused by a virus. This virus is called Human Papilloma Virus or HPV. Both men and women get genital warts. A person can have HPV in their skin cells and pass it to another person even when no genital warts are seen.

How Do I Get Genital Warts?

Genital Warts are usually spread through sexual contact. It is spread back and forth between partners.

How Do I Know If I Have Genital Warts?

If you are a woman, you may see a wart-like growth in or around your vagina, urethra, rectum, buttocks or the inside of your thighs. These warts may be alone or in groups and they may look like cauliflower. The color may vary from fleshlike to pink or just a little darker than the surrounding skin. You also may have vaginal itching, pain or a vaginal discharge.

Men may have warts on their penis, scrotum or rectum. You also may have penile or rectal itching. Many times the inner urethra or tube, through which urine flows, may be involved.

Your doctor will do tests to see if these warts are HPV. A biopsy may be done which means taking a small sample of the wart and sending it to a laboratory. The laboratory will look at this tissue under a microscope to tell if it is genital warts. A woman may also have a pap smear or a colposcopy to help diagnose HPV. Ask your healthcare providers for more information about these tests.

How are Genital Warts Treated?

There are several ways to treat genital warts and you and your doctor will decide the best treatment for you. There are different types of medicines that can be used on the warts. Your doctor or nurse will explain your medicine in more detail. Other treatments used to kill the warts are cryosurgery, electrosurgery or laser therapy. Cryosurgery freezes the warts. Electrosurgery destroys the warts with electrical heat and laser therapy uses a laser to remove the warts.

What if I get pregnant?

At your first prenatal visit, be sure to tell your doctor if you've had genital warts in the past. Most often the warts will not return during pregnancy if you haven't had them for awhile before getting pregnant. Genital warts can affect pregnancy and delivery, even though the risk is very small. Tell your doctor and talk about which treatment may be best for you. Women with genital warts often have vaginal births. When there are very large warts that block the birth canal, a cesarean birth may be needed.

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Genital Warts *continued*



To help the treatment work or to keep the warts from spreading, you need to do the following:

- Use condoms to prevent the spread of genital warts. However, condoms may not always prevent the spread of the infection because the virus may be in skin that is not covered by the condom
- Do not have sexual contact (oral, vaginal, or anal) during treatment or outbreaks
- Tell your current and past partners about the warts so that they can be examined and treated
- Have regular pap tests. Talk to your doctor/nurse about how often you should have this done
- Keep your genital area clean and dry
- Wear loose fitting clothes, cotton underwear and do not wear pantyhose
- Eat a nutritious and balanced diet
- Avoid alcohol abuse
- Get plenty of rest and sleep
- Keep your stress level down
- Finish all treatments
- **Please stop smoking!** Cigarette smoking has been strongly associated with initial onset of warts and the return of warts after treatment. Talk with your doctor about ways to stop smoking.

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