

Genital Warts

Genital Warts (or condyloma) is a sexually transmitted disease caused by the human papilloma virus (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, on the cervix, (opening to the uterus), or around the rectum. The virus is passed from one person to another during anal or vaginal sex. These are not the same warts commonly found on hands and feet.

How do I know if I have Genital Warts?

Not everyone who has 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. Women may find out about having the wart virus if it shows up on the “pap smear” test.

How are Genital Warts spread?

The wart virus can be present on the penis, outside or inside the vagina, anus, or on the skin around these areas. It 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. It's possible to have been exposed to the wart virus months or years before warts appear.

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 wart virus. Most are harmless (especially the ones that cause visible warts). There are a few types which can cause changes in the cells of the cervix (opening to the uterus) or the cells of the anus. There are many treatments available if this develops on the cervix. For that reason all women, including women with visible warts on the outside of the body should have a “pap smear” test every year.

How are Genital Warts treated?

There are several different chemicals (treatments) that can be used to remove the warts, and some can be applied at home by the person who has warts. 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. Evaluation and experimental treatments are also now being offered in some settings for anal warts. Talk to your clinician about this.

Will the Warts come back?

Warts may return, even after treatment, this is because the virus stays in the skin once you are infected. You can pass the virus to your sex partners during vaginal or anal sex, even when you don't have visible warts.

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 wart virus. We do advise yearly "pap smears" for all women whose male sex partners have genital warts.

How can I avoid getting Genital Warts?

Even when using condoms 100% of the time you will only reduce your risk of getting warts 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 adults.

Women are advised to have a yearly "pap smear" test and a check-up for STDs. Men are also advised to have a yearly check-up for STDs as many STDs do not have obvious symptoms or signs.

For more STD info:

<http://www.noah-health.org/>
<http://www.ashastd.org/>
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/>
<http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/sfcityclinic/>
<http://www.sfsi.org/>

Genital Wart Resources:

<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/stdhpv.htm>
<http://www.hpvenews.com>
<http://www.ashastd.org/hpvccrc/chat.html>

WARNING: HIV is also an STD! All STDs are spread by having unsafe sex. When you get infected with an STD, you could also be getting HIV. Protect yourself – use condoms (male or female)!



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

City Clinic
356 Seventh Street
(between Folsom and Harrison)
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415)487-5500
<http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/sfcityclinic/>