

GENITAL WARTS

Genital warts (also called venereal warts) are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV is related to the virus that causes common skin warts, and genital warts may appear similar to skin warts—or they may be invisible, or in places that cannot be seen, such as the cervix. HPV is a sexually transmitted disease and is spread by close physical contact. The warts may take weeks or even months to show up, so it may not be obvious who infected you with the virus.

HPV can lead to cervical cancer in women or cancer of the penis in men. It is important that you visit your doctor if you suspect you have genital warts.

Untreated, the warts can grow to resemble tiny cauliflowers. If HPV has infected the cervix, this will show up as an abnormal Pap smear. Left untreated, these cells could lead to cancer of the cervix.

Treatment

Your health care provider can remove the warts by:

- Using **podophyllin** to treat external warts. This is a liquid that is painted on the wart and washed off in 4 hours. **Do not use podophyllin if you might be pregnant.**
- Using **liquid nitrogen** to freeze the wart.

Treatment may involve once-per-week visits for 4 to 6 weeks, to make sure the warts are completely gone. Treatment can remove the warts, but the virus remains in your body; it may even cause the warts to reappear.

Protection

- Always use condoms when you have sex.
- Only abstinence is 100% effective in preventing STDs
- Limit your partners. Having multiple partners greatly increases your chances of getting an STD.
- Have regular checkups and yearly Pap smears. Early discovery of abnormal cells may prevent you from getting cancer.