



GENITAL WARTS

What are genital warts?

Warts are skin growths caused by a group of viruses called the human papillomavirus virus (HPV). Some types of HPV cause warts on the hands or feet, while others can cause visible genital warts. Sometimes, people with HPV don't have warts, and many people with genital HPV are not aware they have it.

What do genital warts look like?

Genital warts are usually raised or flat skin growths. They can be single or multiple and small or large.

<p>Remember: HPV can live in the skin without causing any visible warts at all. This is called "subclinical" HPV infection.</p>
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Who gets genital warts?

Genital warts can occur in any sexually active person. They are spread by direct, physical contact with someone who has the infection. Since different types of HPV cause warts on other parts of the body, such as the hands, contact with these warts does not seem to cause genital warts.

Genital warts may appear within a few weeks or as long as many years after contact with an infected person; or they may never appear. This makes it very difficult to know exactly when and from whom you got the virus.

Little is known about the transmission of subclinical HPV infection, but it is probable less contagious than visible genital warts.

Are genital warts dangerous?

Some types of HPV have been linked to cervical cancer. Therefore, it is very important that women with genital warts, like any sexually active woman, should get yearly Pap smears.

Can genital warts be cured?

No, none of the available treatments can cure HPV. The virus can remain in the skin even after all the visible warts have been treated. Because the virus can remain in the skin, in some cases the warts return after months or even years. In other cases, the warts do not recur.



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How are they treated?

There are several ways of treating genital warts. The goal of treatment should be to remove visible genital warts and get rid of annoying symptoms. None of the treatments is better than the others and no single treatment is ideal for all cases. The treatment used depends on many factors, including the size, location and the number of warts.

- **Liquid Nitrogen** is an extremely cold liquid that is put on the wart by a nurse or doctor until it is frozen. A blister may develop within a few hours. This may be filled with clear or dark fluid. It is best to leave the blister alone and allow it to dry; however, if the blister is painful, you may prick the edge with a needle (after sterilizing the needle by holding over a flame for 2-3 seconds). If the blister roof breaks and leaves a raw surface, gently clean the area with water and apply a thin layer of bacitracin ointment (available OTC).
- **Podofilox solution or gel** Is a patient-applied therapy for genital warts. Be sure to follow the instructions carefully.

Remember: Be patient—treatment often takes several visits to the doctor or nurse.
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How can I prevent getting genital warts?

- At the present time there is no vaccine or other way to prevent warts.
- You can reduce your risk of getting genital warts by not having sex with anyone, or by having sex only with one uninfected partner who has sex only with you.
- Condoms (“rubbers), used properly, provide some protection if they cover the area of the HPV infection.