

Genital Warts

What is it?

Genital warts are warty lumps on the genital skin. They are caused by an infection with human papillomavirus (HPV). There are many types of HPV that can infect the genital and anal area. Only some types of HPV cause genital warts.

How do I know I have it?

Only about 10% of people with genital HPV will develop visible genital warts. Warts are usually painless and can disappear without treatment.

Genital warts can develop on the vulva, vagina, neck of the womb (cervix), penis, balls (testes), bottom (anus) and rarely in the mouth.

Some types of HPV can cause genital cancers. These types are different to the ones causing genital warts.

How did I get it?

Genital HPV is passed on by skin-to-skin contact. This can happen during sex including oral sex. HPV can be passed on even when no warts are visible. The warts can appear from 3 – 12 months after infection with HPV.

How can I make sure I don't get it?

Teenagers are now offered HPV vaccine at school in Australia. This vaccine protects against the most common types of HPV that cause genital warts. HPV vaccines also protect against some HPV strains which cause cervical cancer.

Unless you have had the vaccine, you can get genital HPV. This happens in about 80% of sexually active people soon after becoming sexually active.

Condoms can reduce the risk of passing on HPV but not completely. Condoms only protect the genital areas being covered.

How can the nurse/ Doctor tell me if I have it?

Genital warts can be found by checking for visible lumps on the genital and anus skin.

How can I get rid of it?

Genital warts can stay the same, get worse or go away without treatment. Most people want them treated.

You can treat genital warts yourself by putting a special paint or cream on them. Your doctor will prescribe this treatment for you. Sometimes your doctor will freeze or burn the warts.

Paints used for warts on other part of your body should not be used on your genitals. These paints are too strong and can cause damage to genital skin.

Even after treatment, warts can come back. Several treatment are sometimes needed before they go completely.

If you have HPV, cervical screening checks (for cancer causing HPV) are the same.

Who do I need to tell and why?

Let your partners know to visit a doctor or sexual health clinic for a general sexual health check up.

This fact sheet is just some general information. If you are worried about your health go and see a doctor.

For more information or support visit:

For more information on STIs and safe sex visit the Play Safe website:

www.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au

Sexual Health Info Link is a service that you can call up for information on STIs and sexual health. It's anonymous and non-judgemental. Call: 1800 451 624 or visit <https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/>

“Let them know” allows you to send an anonymous messages to tell someone you've had sex with that they have come into contact with the infection: <http://www.letthemknow.org.au/>