

condyloma Ta

or genital warts

Québec 

Information for the infected person and his/her sex partners

Condylomata, or genital warts, are one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). They are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV).

There are actually many types of human papilloma virus. Some, but not all, are associated with cancer. Condylomata, or genital warts, are generally caused by viruses that are not associated with cancer.

HOW IS THE VIRUS TRANSMITTED?

The human papilloma virus (HPV) is transmitted through direct contact with the genitals of an infected person. In rare cases, an infected mother can transmit the virus to her child, especially when she gives birth.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Most often, when the person catches the virus, there are no symptoms. So it is possible to be infected without knowing it and without seeing anything unusual. The virus sometimes shows up in the form of warts on the genitals, on the anus, in the rectum or, much more rarely, in the mouth. These manifestations are called genital warts or external condylomata. Often, the virus also causes a cervical infection (see pamphlet on cervical HPV infection).

Condylomata may appear several months after a person has caught the virus. The shape and colour of the warts depend on where they are located. They can be shades of pink, white or gray. Condylomata on the vulva, penis or anus can usually be seen with the naked eye.

Condylomata do not usually cause any pain. Occasionally, they may be accompanied by irritation, itching or bleeding.

COMPLICATIONS?

In most cases, condylomata on the vulva, penis or anus last from a few weeks to a few months, and do not cause any complications. The lesions are generally not associated with cancer.

With some people, including those with a deficient immune system, condylomata may last for an unusually long time—for instance, more than a year.

Condylomata or genital warts

Condylomata sometimes increase in size during pregnancy, but generally shrink or disappear after delivery.

PROPER TREATMENT

Condylomata often shrink and disappear without intervention. However, they may cause discomfort. There are several procedures available for eliminating them. In some cases, the treatment prescribed by the doctor can be administered by the patient at home; in others, it must be

administered by the doctor. Your doctor will recommend the most appropriate treatment for you, depending on the location of the condylomata, as well as their number and progression.

Following treatment, the virus may still be present, even if no lesions are visible. This explains why condylomata can reappear. Fortunately, 85% of people eventually eliminate the virus (HPV). However, there are no tests to confirm that the virus has been eliminated. Your doctor will talk to you about the follow-up you need.

If you find out that you are infected, your sex partners can see a doctor even if they have no lesions or visible symptoms.

PREVENTION

CONDOMS... SOMETIMES OR ALWAYS?

It is recommended that a condom be used with any new sex partner in order to reduce the risk of transmission of STDs, including HPV. You should ALWAYS use a condom for any sexual activity involving penetration of the penis into the vagina or anus. It is preferable as well to use a condom for oral sex involving penetration of the penis into the mouth.

HPV infections are more common among couples who are new sex partners. It is therefore a particularly good idea for them to use a condom during the first year of their relationship. However, if the lesions are not covered by the condom, the virus can still be transmitted.

If a member of a couple has had an infected partner for **more than a year**, it is highly likely that he/she has already been exposed to the virus. Continued condom use among couples in this situation does not appear to be of any help in

preventing the risk of recurrence of condylomata. The two partners can stop using a condom as long as they have no other STDs and have no other sex partners.

SCREENING

There are no screening tests for condylomata.

CERVICAL INFECTION: SOMETHING TO CHECK FOR . . .

The cervix is a frequent site of HPV infection among women. The infection may cause lesions that can be detected by a cervical cytology, or Pap test, performed during a gynecologic exam. Cervical lesions cannot be seen during examination of the external genitals. It is therefore recommended that women who have condylomata or whose sex partner has condylomata have a gynecologic (cervical) examination.

REMEMBER

- Condylomata are common.
- Condylomata are usually benign in their evolution.
- A woman who has condylomata must have a cervical examination.
- Condom use at all times during sexual intercourse reduces the risk of transmission of STDs, including HPV.
- If in doubt, do not hesitate to consult a doctor.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR CLSC'S INFO-SANTÉ SERVICE OR YOUR DOCTOR.



www.msss.gouv.qc.ca

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