
Sexually Transmitted Diseases :

Genital Warts

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

What are they ?

Genital warts are caused by a virus called **human papillomavirus (HPV)**. They look like common skin warts, but they appear on the genital area (vagina, cervix, penis) and around the anus.

How did I get them ?

By direct contact, usually sexual, with a person who has them. The warts usually appear two weeks to eight months after contact. Infected people may spread the virus to other parts of their own body with their hands.

What can these warts do to me ?

Genital warts are generally harmless. Some are soft and pink and look like tiny cauliflowers. Others are hard, yellow-grey and smooth. Anal warts may be mistaken for hemorrhoids (piles).

Pregnancy may make warts grow more quickly. This can cause problems when the baby is born. Certain types of warts are linked to an increased risk of cancer of the cervix.

How are they treated ?

Keep the infected area dry. Wear only cotton underclothes. Avoid synthetic materials like nylon. Your doctor or clinic can use a number of treatments, such as skin

medications, burning, and laser therapy. Certain medications (podophyllin, etc.) should not be used during pregnancy.

Does treatment work ?

Usually. If the warts are not cured, they may be removed surgically.

Could I give them to other people ?

Yes, your sexual partner(s) should be examined and treated if necessary.

When can I have sex again ?

When warts can no longer be detected.

Remember :

Genital warts are usually harmless, but they can be stubborn to treat.

- Finish the treatment your doctor or clinic prescribes;
- Return for check-up visits as your doctor or clinic asks;
- Avoid sexual contact while the warts are present;
- Tell your partner(s) so they can be examined, and treated if necessary;
- Have a doctor remove any warts on other parts of your body, especially the fingers;
- Use condoms to lower the chance of infections in future;

- If you are a woman, have regular Pap smears.

If you are worried or have more questions,
call your local health unit or STD clinic.

Government of Ontario

For information about health services and
resources :

www.health.gov.on.ca

For consumer-friendly health tips and
information :

www.HealthyOntario.com

INFOline: 1-877-234-4343;

TTY: 1-800-387-5559

Telehealth Ontario:

1-866-797-0000; TTY 1-866-797-0007

INFOline is open during business hours
and can provide general information on
healthcare.

Telehealth Ontario is a 24/7 service which
uses nurse practitioners to answer your
immediate health concerns.