

GENITAL WARTS

Patient Fact Sheet

Introduction

You have been diagnosed with Genital Warts, a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). Genital warts are spread by sexual contact, which includes vaginal, oral and anal sex. It is the most common STD found in approximately 40 million Americans. There are about 60 different types of HPV, and of those 60, only 1/3 are passed during sex.

The symptoms that you might notice include

- Symptoms occur 3-4 months after sexual contact with an infected person
- Genital warts are soft, flat, irregular shaped growths and are usually a flesh color
- Depending on the type of sexual contact, you may notice warts on the vagina, vulva, penis, scrotum, anus, rectum or mouth and throat
- The warts are usually painless but as they enlarge and multiply, the warts can cause discomfort

Signs that your health care provider may find on examination:

- The health care provider will perform a genital exam and visually inspect the lesions
- The health care provider may apply a solution of acetic acid (vinegar) to the suspicious areas in order to see the wart better. Putting vinegar on the warts causes the warts to turn a whitish color, which makes it easier to see and diagnose.

Treatment

- Different treatments exist for genital warts, depending on the size and number of warts you have
- Surgery may be performed to remove the warts
- Cryotherapy (freezing off external warts) and topical creams are common treatments
- It is important to remember that while cryotherapy and creams may treat the visible warts, the • Human Papilloma Virus remains in the body forever, so you might develop genital warts again

Prevention

Once you have been diagnosed with genital warts, you must tell all sexual partners so they may be tested and treated. Some forms of HPV can cause cervical cancer in women. Cervical cancer is detected by PAP smear, which is why the PAP smear is a must for all sexually active females.

- Avoid intercourse until the treatment is complete
- Use condoms with spermicidal jelly or foam during intercourse. Even though the patient may not have visible warts present, the virus stays in the body forever
- Limit the number of sexual partners

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