

## A COMMON PROBLEM

As many as 8 out of 10 of us will have the virus (HPV) that can cause genital warts and most of us won't even know we have it. For some, however, the virus will cause warts on the genitals.

## HOW DID I GET THIS?

You have had skin-to-skin contact with someone who had HPV.

This virus is

- very common
- easily passed from one person to another
- and most people have the virus without having any warts

Your partner may not know he/she has it.

## WHEN DID I GET THE VIRUS?

Warts may appear weeks, months, or sometimes even years after you were exposed to the virus, so it is often impossible to know when you got the virus or who gave it to you.

## ARE GENITAL WARTS SERIOUS?

Genital warts are caused by a low-risk type of HPV that will not lead to cancer.

Genital warts will not affect a woman's chance of becoming pregnant.

## CAN I GET RID OF THEM?

Yes, it's likely that with treatment you will get rid of the warts and they will not come back.

If you are HIV positive, have diabetes, or another chronic condition, or you smoke, it may be more difficult to get rid of the warts.

## HOW ARE THEY TREATED?

Health Quarters offers two options: acid treatment or freezing.

TCA is an acid that is applied to the warts with a Q-tip, turning them white. The stinging sensation usually lasts only a few minutes. Usually, the treated area develops a scab which will fall off and the area underneath heals in a few days.

HistoFreeze is a freezing treatment that is applied to the warts with a swab. Each wart gets treated for about 40 seconds. The coldness of the treatment is usually only uncomfortable for a few minutes. Usually, the warts fall off and the sore heals in a few days.

The treated areas do not need any special care. Just keep them clean with normal bathing, and dry.

The number of weekly treatments you need depends on your immune response as your body helps to fight off the virus.

There are also two home treatments, which can be expensive and require a prescription. If you use these, Health Quarters recommends you stay in treatment until all the warts are gone; otherwise, they may start to grow again.

Over-the-counter wart treatments are not recommended for the genital area.

## WHAT ABOUT ORAL AND ANAL SEX?

It is very rare for HPV to cause warts in the mouth or throat, but you can get genital warts near or on the anus. You do not have to have had anal sex to get them.

## ABOUT MY CURRENT PARTNER

Because the virus is passed so easily, you and your partner are most likely sharing the virus. If you're in a committed relationship and aren't currently using condoms, it probably won't help to start using them now.

There is no test for finding the virus on the skin; however, if your partner has visible genital warts, they should be treated.

## ABOUT FUTURE PARTNERS

Since there is more than one type of HPV, you could catch one of the other types from a new partner.

Limiting the number of partners you have is the best way to decrease your chances of getting the virus.

Minimizing skin contact by always using a condom for the first 3-8 months of any new relationship can allow time for you to realize if either of you have brought HPV into the relationship.

Because HPV is so common, and because we don't know how long the infection stays in the body, the value of telling future partners about your HPV history is unknown. It is best to be open and honest in your relationships.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Keep your immune system strong

- Don't smoke and do try to avoid second-hand smoke
- Take a multivitamin
- Avoid shaving the affected area, at least until the warts are gone
- Use a gentle soap such as Cetaphil
- Get tested and treated for any yeast or bacterial vaginosis
- Continue with treatments until all the warts are gone

Women should ask about getting the HPV vaccine, which protects against the four most common types of HPV. Even if you have had genital warts, you should still get the vaccine.

Condoms help protect you from many STDs, including HPV. They should always be used with any new or casual partner.

## OTHER RESOURCES

Not all the information on the internet is accurate. These are sites that you can trust:

[www.ashastd.org/hpvcrc](http://www.ashastd.org/hpvcrc)

[www.cdc.gov/std/hpv](http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv)

## WHAT ARE GENITAL WARTS?

Genital warts look like skin-colored bumps that often have an uneven, cauliflower-like surface. Sometimes they are smooth or flat or have a white or dark color.

The warts may appear anywhere on the genitals or anal area of men or women, especially in areas where the skin is broken. Genital warts do not spread to other parts of the body, however.



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## GENITAL WARTS

.....NOW WHAT?