Genital Warts

Genital warts, also called condyloma, are caused by a virus called human papilloma virus (HPV). Both men and women can get genital warts. A person can have HPV and pass it to another person even when no genital warts are seen.

How do you get genital warts?
Genital warts are spread through sexual contact or close physical contact.

How do I know if I have genital warts?
If you are a woman, you may see warts in or around your vagina, urethra, rectum, buttocks, or the inside of your upper legs. These warts may be alone or in groups, and they may look like cauliflower. The color may vary from flesh-like to pink or just be a little darker than the skin around them. You may also have vaginal itching, pain, or a vaginal discharge.

If you are a man, you may see warts on your penis, scrotum, or rectum. You may also have penile or rectal itching. Many times the tube that urine flows through, called the urethra, is involved.

How are genital warts treated?
There are several ways to treat genital warts. You and your health care provider will decide the best treatment for you.

There are different types of medicines that can be used on the warts. Your health care provider will explain these in more detail.

Other treatments that can be used to remove warts include:

- Cryosurgery that freezes the warts.
- Electrosurgery that destroys the warts with electrical heat.
- Laser therapy that uses laser to remove the warts.

To help the treatment work or keep them from spreading?
- Use condoms. However, condoms may not always prevent the spread of the infection because the virus may be in skin that is not covered by the condom.
- Do not have sexual contact (oral, vaginal, or anal) during treatment for genital warts or outbreaks.
To limit outbreaks

- Do not smoke. Cigarette smoking has been strongly linked with the return of warts after treatment. Talk with your health care provider about quitting or call Ohio Quits at 1-800-Quit-Now or 1-800-784-8669.
- Tell your current and past sexual partners about the genital warts, so they can be examined and treated.
- Have regular pap tests. Talk to your health care provider about how often you should have this done.
- Keep your genital area clean and dry.
- Wear loose fitting clothes.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- Eat a nutritious and balanced diet.
- Avoid alcohol and drug abuse.
- Get plenty of rest and sleep.
- Keep your stress level down.
- Finish all treatments for genital warts.

What if I get pregnant?

At your first prenatal visit, be sure to tell your doctor if you have had genital warts in the past. Most often the warts will not return during pregnancy if you have not had them for some time before getting pregnant.

Genital warts can affect pregnancy and delivery, even though the risk is very small. Talk to your health care provider about which treatment may be best for you while pregnant.

Women with genital warts often have vaginal births. When there are very large warts that block the birth canal, a cesarean birth may be needed.