
Department of Genitourinary Medicine

Genital warts

What are genital warts?

Genital warts are a very common condition and in the vast majority of cases are acquired through sexual contact.

They are caused by infection with certain types of human papilloma virus (HPV). These types are different from the types causing ordinary skin warts. The incubation period between catching the virus and developing warts varies from a few weeks to many months.

We now know that many people carry HPV (wart virus) but do not appear to develop warts - this is called 'sub-clinical infection'. Although there is currently a great deal of uncertainty regarding HPV infection, we suspect that these sub-clinical infections are not very infectious. This is in contrast to genital warts where the virus is quite 'active' and, therefore, more likely to pass on to a sexual partner.

What is the treatment?

Treatment of warts may be achieved by painting with Podophyllin liquid, freezing, burning or surgery. It is probable that we will need to see you on a regular weekly basis. None of these treatments are able to eradicate the virus. For this reason, some people do develop a recurrence of their warts after apparently successful treatment. This is most likely to occur within a couple of months of stopping treatment.

Are there any risks or side effects from the treatment?

Some patients become sore during treatment but this can be helped by bathing with salty water, as will be explained to you during your clinic visit.

What precautions should I take?

When warts are present, it is advisable to alter sexual practices in order to avoid transmitting the virus. In some cases this will mean refraining from sexual intercourse; in others the use of a condom may be sufficient. It is probably wise to use condoms for about three months after the warts have gone.

There is a link between infection with HPV and the development of cervical abnormalities in women. However, the types of HPV causing cervical pre-cancer or cancer are different from the types that cause genital warts.

Women with genital warts do not need to have more frequent cervical smears.

Very occasionally HPV may be passed on to the mouth by oro-genital contact although we must stress that mouth warts are very uncommon. However, because of the small risk, we would recommend that oral sex is avoided or that protection is used (for example, flavoured condoms) while genital warts are present.

When can I come to the clinic for treatment?

You may come in between 0830 and 0930 hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday without an appointment, or between 0900 and 1600 hours Monday to Friday with an appointment.

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Potete chiedere di ottenere queste informazioni in altre lingue, in stampato grande o in audiocassetta.

Italian

若你需要本信息的繁體中文、大字體或音訊格式的版本，請要求索取。

Cantonese

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Gujarati

تکایہ پرسیار بکے نہ گھر نہ و زانیاریہت دہوی بہ زمانیکی تر . بہ بیسی گہورہ یانیش بہ شیوہی دہنگ

Kurdish

آگر آپ کو یہ معلومات دوسری زبانوں میں، بڑے الفاظ کی اشاعت میں یا آڈیو ٹیپ پر درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی اس کیلئے درخواست کریں۔

Urdu



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Document history

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