

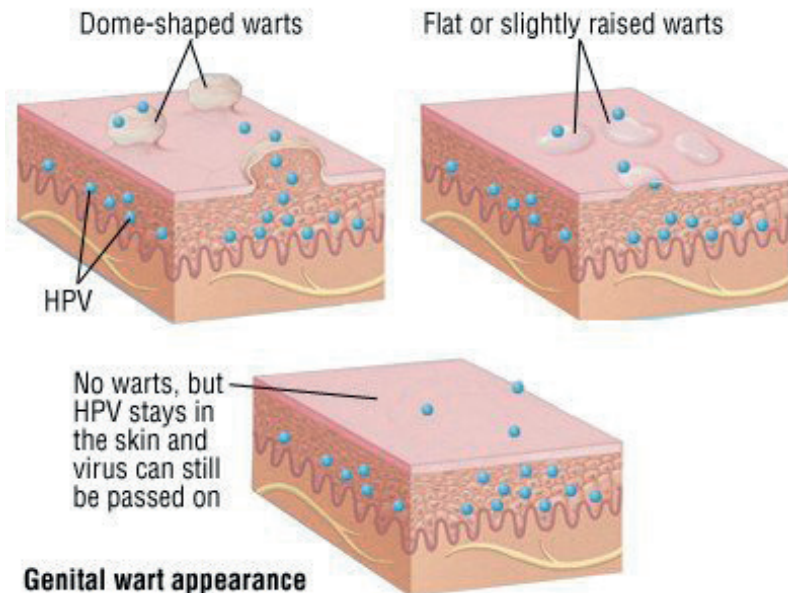
# GENITAL WARTS



If you've noticed skin growths of different shapes and sizes on your genitals, groin or anal area, these may well be genital warts. This is a common condition, spread through sexual contact. Fortunately, there are good options available to treat genital warts.

## OVERVIEW

Genital warts, also called "anogenital warts" are small, noncancerous growths in the anogenital area i.e., on the genitals, anus and groin. They are the result of a very common sexually transmitted infection (STI). While it may be upsetting to discover you have this condition, your doctor can easily advise you on the best way to prevent and treat genital warts.<sup>1,2</sup>



## CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS

What are warts?<sup>2,3</sup>

Warts form when your skin is infected with one of the highly contagious viruses belonging to the human papillomavirus (HPV) family. This virus causes cell growth and thickening of the outer layer of the skin, forming a wart.

Genital warts spread when an infected person's skin touches someone else's skin, usually during sexual contact. You have a 75% risk of contracting the virus and developing genital warts if you have sex with an HPV-infected person.

"Common" or "non-genital" warts occur most often on the hands: these aren't the same as genital warts. While both types of warts are caused by the HPV group, the viral strains that cause each type are different and are transmitted differently. Common warts don't cause genital warts and vice versa.

In rare cases, if you have oral sex with an infected person, warts may develop in your mouth or throat.

If you're sexually active, you're at risk of becoming infected with genital HPV. However, your risk is increased through:<sup>2,3,4</sup>

- Having unprotected sex
- Having multiple sexual partners
- Sharing sex toys
- Not knowing your partner's sexual history
- Having had another STI
- Becoming sexually active at a younger age (mid-teens)
- Having a compromised immune system (e.g., people who have HIV/AIDS)

Can genital warts cause cancer?<sup>5,6</sup>

The type of HPV that causes genital warts is low-risk for more serious diseases like cancer. While certain other types of HPV can cause cancer (e.g., cervical cancer), the type of HPV that causes genital warts does not.

People sometimes refer to genital warts in the vagina or on the vulva as "vaginal warts". In women, genital warts can also sometimes affect the cervix. In men, genital warts can affect the penis and scrotum. "Anal warts" are genital warts in the area around and in the anus.



## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of genital HPV can occur from three weeks to years after infection, but usually occur within about two to three months.<sup>1</sup>

Symptoms may include:<sup>2,4</sup>

- Visible warts in the anogenital area. Genital warts can be various shapes and sizes. They may appear as pink, brown or flesh-coloured swellings; as flat white patches; or as cauliflower-shaped when several are in close proximity
- Itching or discomfort
- Warts in the mouth or throat It's important to note that HPV infection can stay in your body's cells, and it's possible to spread genital warts even if you have no signs of them.<sup>1</sup>

It's important to note that HPV infection can stay in your body's cells, and it's possible to spread genital warts even if you have no signs of them.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW TO TREAT GENITAL WARTS

Luckily there is treatment available for this condition – but the sooner you treat genital warts, the better.

Topical creams, applied directly to the skin, are extremely effective and usually what your doctor will first recommend to treat genital warts. Glenmark has launched an Imiquimod Cream, which is recommended as first-line treatment by 14 global anogenital wart experts.<sup>8</sup> This cream uses the person's own immune system to clear the warts and has proven efficacy. It has a simple regimen, is easily self-applied and usually preferred by patients.<sup>9</sup>

Ask your healthcare professional about Glenmark's new product.

Imiquimod cream has also been shown to have lower recurrence rates of genital warts than surgical removal methods<sup>8</sup>

In some cases, your doctor may suggest additional options for removal, including<sup>4</sup>:

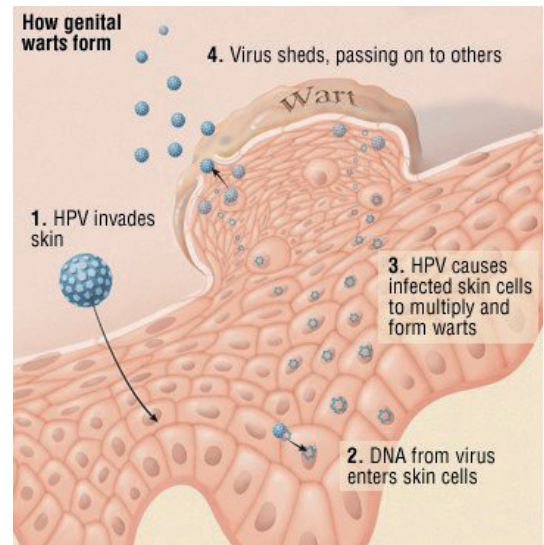
- Surgical removal
- Freezing the warts (cryosurgery)
- Laser treatment
- Using electric currents to burn off the warts (electrocautery)

Never try to treat genital warts with home remedies or attempt to cut or burn them off yourself. You should also avoid using non-prescription wart removal products for non-genital warts, as these aren't intended for the genital area and can be harmful.<sup>1</sup>

## DIAGNOSIS

Consult your doctor as soon as possible if:<sup>3</sup>

- You notice skin growths in the anogenital area
- Your partner develops genital warts, even if you don't
- You are experiencing bleeding and/or itching in your anogenital area
- Your urine flow changes and doesn't return to normal (e.g., urine flowing sideways)



## IMPACT ON QUALITY OF LIFE

People who have genital warts may find the condition embarrassing and the associated discomfort can interrupt daily activities and affect your general wellbeing – not to mention put you in awkward situations if you find yourself needing to scratch that itch in a public setting.

It's helpful to remember that HPV is a very common STI that many people have to deal with: the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that almost all sexually active people will be infected with the genital HPV virus at some point.<sup>4</sup>

You might find it a little difficult to have conversations with sexual partners about HPV and other STIs, but keep in mind that managing the condition is vital in order to prevent its further spread.

## PREVENTION AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Methods to avoid getting genital warts in the first place include<sup>2,3,4</sup>:

- Vaccinations that protect against HPV infection: these also protect against the HPV which causes genital warts. Anyone aged 9 to 45 years old can receive this vaccine.
- Always using condoms during sex (although keep in mind this only covers a limited skin area).
- Refraining from sex during genital wart treatment.
- Not sharing sex toys, washing them after use and using a new condom on them with each use.

---

**Please note :** this is an education information leaflet only and should not be used for diagnosis. For more information on *Genital Warts*, consult your healthcare professional.

---

**References:** **1.** Genital Warts (Human Papillomavirus) | Michigan Medicine [Internet]. Uofmhealth.org. 2021 [cited 22 October 2021]. Available from: <https://www.uofmhealth.org/healthlibrary/hw105401> **2.** Genital warts – Symptoms and causes [Internet]. Mayo Clinic. 2021 [cited 22 October 2021]. Available from: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/genital-warts/symptomscauses/syc-20355234> **3.** Genital warts [Internet]. nhs.uk. 2021 [cited 22 October 2021]. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/genital-warts/> **4.** Genital Warts [Internet]. Healthline. 2021 [cited 22 October 2021]. Available from: <https://www.healthline.com/health/std/genital-warts#outlook> **5.** Basic Information about HPV and Cancer | CDC [Internet]. Cdc.gov. 2021 [cited 24 October 2021]. Available from: [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/basic\\_info/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/basic_info/index.htm) **6.** Types of Human Papillomavirus [Internet]. Nyulangone.org. 2021 [cited 24 October 2021]. Available from: <https://nyulangone.org/conditions/human-papillomavirus-in-adults/types> **7.** Dempsey A. Human papillomavirus: the usefulness of risk factors in determining who should get vaccinated. Rev Obstet Gynecol [Internet]. 2008 [cited 24 October 2021];1(3):122-128. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2582644/> **8.** O'Mahoney C, Gomberg M, Skerlev M et al. Position statement for the diagnosis and management of anogenital warts. JEADV. 2019; DOI: 10.1111/jdv.15570 **9.** O'Mahoney C. What wart? 2nd Edition. Anogenital warts: a pictorial guide to diagnosis and management. Available from: <http://chestersexualhealth.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2014/03/WhatWart.pdf> [Accessed July 2021] Types of Human Papillomavirus [Internet]. Nyulangone.org. 2021 [cited 24 October 2021].

**Figures:**

Figure 1: Genital Warts. [Internet]. Drugs.com. 2021 [cited 24 October 2021]. Available from: <https://www.drugs.com/health-guide/genital-warts.html>

Figure 2: Genital Warts. [Internet]. Drugs.com. 2021 [cited 24 October 2021]. Available from: <https://www.drugs.com/health-guide/genital-warts.html>

