

STD Facts

Genital Warts/HPV (caused by human papillomavirus - HPV)

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Genital Warts Symptoms:

- Develop 1-6 months after exposure
- Soft fleshy lumps on or near sex organs or anus
- Itching or burning around sex organs
- Warts may be hidden in the vagina or anus
- Warts do not go away without treatment
- The warts may go away with treatment, but the HPV infection persists

TRANSMISSION

Genital Warts are Spread by:

- Vaginal sex
- Oral sex
- Anal sex
- Contact with infected person's warts
- Infected mother to newborn
- Warts/HPV may be spread even if no warts are visible due to viral shedding on areas not protected by a condom

COMPLICATIONS/CONSEQUENCES

If Left Untreated, Genital Warts can:

- Be passed to newborn during childbirth; can cause warts in infant's throat
- Spread to other sex partners

Some virus strains lead to abnormal Pap test, increased risk of cervical, and/or penile cancer, but these strains do not cause visible warts. Sexually active women should have yearly Pap tests.

A physician must perform a special test to identify the cancer associated strains.

PREVENTION

Recommendations to Reduce the Spread of Genital Warts/HPV:

- Genital ulcer diseases and HPV infections can occur in genital areas that are covered or protected by a latex condom. They can also occur in areas that are not covered or protected. Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of HPV infection only when the infected areas are covered or protected by the condom. In addition, the use of latex condoms has been associated with a reduction in risk of HPV-associated diseases, such as cervical cancer.
- Always use latex condoms during vaginal and anal sex.
- Use a latex condom for oral sex on penis
- Use a latex barrier for oral sex on a vagina or anus (dental dam or condom cut in half)
- Limit the number of sex partners
- Get an exam for genital warts by a doctor or other medical provider if infection is suspected

TREATMENT

Treatment of Genital Warts/HPV:

- Warts can be treated, but HPV cannot be cured
- Requires medical treatment by doctor
- Drugstore treatment for other kinds of warts may be harmful if used on genital warts
- No increased cancer risk with HPV strains that cause visible genital warts

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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HIV/AIDS STD TB Hepatitis Program
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CDC National STD and AIDS Hotlines
1-800-227-8922; 1-800-243-7889 TTY