



Genital warts appear as a small bump or groups of bumps in the genital area. They can be small or large, raised or flat, or shaped like a cauliflower. They are caused by some types of human papilloma virus (HPV). These viruses may not cause warts in everyone.

Genital Warts

How are they spread?

Men can get genital warts from sexual contact with someone who has HPV. Genital warts are spread by skin-to-skin contact, usually from contact with the warts. It can be spread by vaginal, anal, oral, or hand-genital sexual contact. Genital warts will spread HPV while visible and after recent treatment. Long-term sexual partners usually have the same type of wart-causing HPV.

What are signs of genital warts in men?

Genital warts can grow anywhere in the genital area:

- ▶ On the groin.
- ▶ Under the foreskin of the uncircumcised penis.
- ▶ On the shaft of the circumcised penis.
- ▶ In or around the anus.
- ▶ In the mouth or throat (rare).

Genital warts:

- ▶ Can be any size – from so small they can't be seen, to big clusters and lumps.
- ▶ Can be smooth with a "mosaic" pattern or bumpy like a cauliflower.
- ▶ Are soft, moist and flesh-colored.
- ▶ Can cause itching, burning or pain.

*Not all HPV infections cause genital warts. HPV infections often do not have any signs that you can see or feel. Some HPV infections can be more serious, see **HPV and Men**, page 30.*

Even if you see no visible genital warts, you could still have HPV infection.

How is it treated?

See your health care provider (HCP) to discuss treatment. Even when genital warts are treated, the HPV infection may remain. Warts may also return after treatment. Over-the-counter treatments for other types of warts should not be used. Treatments include:

- ▶ Medicines (creams, ointments, solutions or gels) applied directly to the warts.
- ▶ Burning off the warts.
- ▶ Freezing off the warts.
- ▶ Cutting the warts out.
- ▶ Using special lights or lasers to destroy the warts.

Condoms may not fully protect against HPV since HPV can infect areas not covered by a condom.

What can happen if you have genital warts for a long time?

The immune system fights HPV infection. The types of HPV that cause genital warts do not cause cancer. Without any treatment, genital warts may:

- ▶ Go away.
- ▶ Remain unchanged.
- ▶ Increase in size or number.

If you have genital warts:

- ▶ Talk with your HCP about treatment.
- ▶ Know that you may never know when you got HPV or who you got it from.
- ▶ Know that partners who have been together for a while can have the same HPV types, even if both have no signs.

How can you avoid genital warts?

- ▶ Get the HPV vaccine.
 - Certain types of HPV vaccines protect against the low-risk HPV that causes 90% of genital warts.
 - HPV vaccine can be given to males aged 9 to 21 years old.
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends all 11-12 year old males get the HPV vaccine (in 3 doses).
 - Young men can get vaccinated through age 21.
 - Men who have sex with men and men with compromised immune systems (including HIV) can be vaccinated through age 26.
- ▶ Avoid sexual contact.
- ▶ Have safer sex:
 - Reduce the number of sexual partners.
 - Condoms, when used correctly, can reduce the risk of getting HPV. But, condoms may not cover all infected areas. Each time you have sex use a condom:
 - During vaginal sex.
 - During anal sex.
 - During oral sex.
 - Have sex with only one partner who does not have sex with others and does not have HPV.



For more information, see *Safer Sex* on page 71

Learn more:

Veterans Health Library:

http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/Encyclopedia/142,85095_VA

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

www.cdc.gov/hpv/index.html

Genital HPV Infection - Fact Sheet

www.cdc.gov/std/HPV/STDFact-HPV.htm

HPV Vaccination

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hpv/default.htm

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6411a3.htm>

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) — Human Papillomavirus Vaccination: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6305a1.htm>

Use of a 2-Dose Schedule for Human Papillomavirus Vaccination – Updated Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6549a5.htm>

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID/NIH):

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and Genital Warts

<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/std-research>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office on Women's Health:

Human papillomavirus (HPV) and genital warts fact sheet

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/files/assets/docs/fact-sheets/genital-warts-factsheet.pdf>