

Genital Warts

Genital warts are called sexually transmitted warts, venereal warts, or condyloma (kon-di-LO ma). These warts are small, rough bumps around the vagina or anus, or on the penis. Usually, they are painless. Many people do not know they have genital warts. Girls who have genital warts may have no visible warts on their skin, but warts may be present inside their bodies. Warts can be discovered in the vagina during a pelvic exam.

Genital warts are caused by a virus that usually spreads through sexual contact. The virus is called human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV can not be killed by antibiotics or other medicines. Once you are infected with HPV, it will stay in your body. It may or may not cause you to have genital warts. Genital warts on the outside of the body can be treated with medicine. This does not kill the virus, and the warts may come and go.

Inside the body, HPV can damage a woman's cervix, the opening of the womb in the vagina. This damage can lead to cancer of the cervix. The risk seems to increase with cigarette smoking. Currently, doctors do not believe that HPV causes cancer in guys.

If you are female and have genital warts, it is very important to make sure that the virus is not harming your body. A special examination of the cervix called colposcopy may be necessary. You must have regular checkups with Pap smears, as recommended by your doctor or nurse.

If you have genital warts or have been told that you are infected with HPV, you can pass this infection to your sexual partner. Remember, you will always carry this virus in your body. You can spread it even when no warts can be seen. **To stop the spread of this disease, it is very important that you use a condom every time you have sex.** The **only** way to keep yourself safe from sexually transmitted diseases is to abstain from sex.

For more information about genital warts or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), talk to your doctor or nurse, or call the Children's Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188.