



## ***Genital Warts (Condyloma)***

### ***What causes these warts and how are they spread?***

Genital warts are caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). In adults, transmission is usually (but not always) sexually. The contact may have been recent or months to years earlier. It is therefore difficult to determine how you caught this virus.

### ***Should all condyloma be treated?***

Treatment is advisable; however, the warts may sometimes spontaneously go away but recurrence rates are high. Even if all visible lesions are gone, the virus may still reside on the skin and be transmissible.

### ***What types of treatments are possible?***

There is presently no cure for this virus. Treatment is aimed at trying to eliminate visible lesions.

- Topical preparations include Aldara cream and Condylox gel. These medications are applied at home for several months. Pain and blistering may result - soaking in a bathtub for a few days is helpful.
- Freezing with liquid nitrogen is the other most common method of treatment. This is a painful method and multiple treatments are usually needed. Subsequent discomfort and blistering usually lasts one or two weeks.
- Other treatments are possible in resistant cases; however, recurrences are common with all treatments.

### ***Should all sexual partners be examined?***

Yes, examination of partners is recommended. Female sex partners should be examined by a gynecologist and have regular pap smears (*There are sometimes internal warts that may in certain cases increase the risk of cervical cancer.*) We occasionally treat external lesions in females. However, the female still must see their gynecologist on a regular basis for evaluation and treatment of internal lesions. Gynecologists often treat the external lesions as well.

### ***How do I prevent transmitting condyloma to a sexual partner?***

Condoms may be helpful but are not 100% effective in prevention of transmission. Abstinence is the only way to guarantee that these lesions will not be spread to other individuals.

### ***How common is this virus?***

Genital warts are prevalent because they are so easily transmitted.

### ***How did I contract this virus?***

It is impossible to ever be sure who you contracted this virus from if you have had more than one sexual partner in your lifetime. Many people carry this virus and may not have visible warts. Women may only have internal lesions. You may have contracted this virus years ago and have only now developed visible lesions. It is also possible for a wart on the finger to spread to the genital area. The bottom line is this: Please try to avoid destroying a good relationship with your spouse/significant other trying to find the answer to a question that is difficult and usually impossible to answer.

## ***Human Papilloma Virus - Warts and Cervical Cancer***

*(Source: American Skin Association)*

Warts - skin colored elevations or papules - are unattractive and persistent, with an increasing number of lesions occurring over time. The skin of the hands, the soles of the feet, and the ano-genital area are common locations. All warts are caused by one of the 60 types of human papilloma virus (HPV), each different in its biochemical makeup and growth potential. *HPV infects approximately 24 million Americans.* The clinical manifestation varies from the common wart to cancer of the cervix.

### ***Genital Warts:***

About a third of the 60 known HPV viruses survive in genital tissue only. The low-risk types cause genital warts, but high-risk types cause cancer of the cervix. A physician can usually diagnose genital warts by direct visual examination. In women, they occur in and around the vagina, on the cervix, or around the anus. In men, they occur on the tip of the shaft of the penis, on the scrotum, or around the anus.

Women with ano-genital warts should know that more than half the cases of cervical cancer are associated with HPV infections. They should be checked for possible HPV infection of the cervix by means of the Pap-smear test, in which cells lining the cervix are examined for abnormal forms and specifically typed for HPV. If the test is positive, destruction of the cells lining the cervix is indicated.

### ***Treatment:***

There are no cures for eradicating HPV other than destruction of supporting tissues. Long-term therapies may wipe out warts (most treatments eliminate them by destroying the skin that contains them), but the wart virus may linger, dormant, in normal-looking skin for months. Researchers believe that spontaneous cures occur only when the immune system recognizes and eliminates the virus. Today's wart treatments include: topical applications, salicylic acid, cantharidin (blistering agent), trichloroacetic and bichloroacetic acids. Destruction methods include electro surgery, laser surgery, and cryo surgery (freezing with liquid nitrogen). An important recent advance in the treatment of genital warts includes imiquimod, a cream that prompts the patient's immune system to attack the virus.

### ***The Outlook:***

Medical researchers have recently developed a vaccine that will prevent infection with the HPV types that are implicated in cervical cancers.

### ***For Questions or Emergency Care:***

Call the office at **601-815-3374**. You may need to speak with the doctor on-call.