

GENITAL WARTS (HPV Infection)

Genital warts are skin-colored, cauliflower-like, painless growths. They are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). These warts also can be flat and hard to see without special tests. They can cause itching and irritation in both males and females. They can occur on the penis, around the opening to the vagina, on the cervix (opening of the womb), or around the rectum. During pregnancy or delivery the HPV virus can be passed on to the baby.

Genital warts are usually spread by sexual contact. These warts often occur along with other vaginal infections. They can grow rapidly, especially during pregnancy, or where there is heavy sweating or moisture.

Genital warts are the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a virus. This is why all sexually active females should be checked, even if they cannot see any warts. The best way to test for the HPV virus is to have a Pap test at least once a year.

TREATMENT

There are several treatments for warts you can see and for the flat warts that are found by a Pap test of the cervix. Your doctor may prescribe a medicine called TCA to treat the warts. If there are many warts, they may need to be removed by surgery or with a laser. We will refer you to a doctor that does this procedure.

If the HPV virus is found with a Pap smear, we will schedule you for a colposcopy (kole-POSS-koe-pee). See the Helping Hand, *Colposcopy – Directed Biopsy*, HH-III-83. The colposcope magnifies the cervix and lets the doctor look for any abnormal areas.

NOTE: Special care is needed when treating pregnant females. Please tell your doctor if there is any chance you may be pregnant. The doctor may want to freeze the warts or remove them surgically.

AFTER USING THE MEDICINE

- The TCA medicine does not need to be washed off until you shower (unless you have pain or stinging).
- Do not have sexual intercourse until your doctor says it is okay. Then a condom should be used. Sex partners may need to be treated also.

If you live in the Columbus area, your partner(s) can be treated at the Columbus City Health Department at 240 Parsons Avenue, 2 blocks north of Nationwide Children's Hospital. The phone number is (614) 645-7772. If you live outside the Columbus area, call your local health department.

PREVENTION OF FUTURE INFECTION

Not having intercourse is the only 100% sure way to prevent genital warts, other sexually transmitted infections (STI's), and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS).

If you choose to have sex, you can do some things that might help prevent the spread of other STI's:

- Respect yourself and your partner.
- Limit the number of sexual partners.
- Know your partner and his or her sexual history.
- Always use a condom. Use it correctly. Use it every time you have sex. Be prepared. Have another condom ready in case the one you are using breaks.
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs. You can't make good choices if you are drunk or stoned.
- Be tested for STI's at least once a year, even if there are no symptoms. Females should have yearly Pap tests. Males should have yearly urine tests.
- Some STI's make it easier for HIV to enter the skin or mucous membranes. If you get more than one STI infection, you should be tested for HIV.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse, or call the Adolescent Health Center at (614) 722-2450. For more facts call the National Hotline at 1-800-227-8922, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.