

What are genital warts?

- Genital warts are small warty lumps caused by the genital wart virus (human papillomavirus [HPV]).
- The warts grow in and around the vagina or penis and around the anus.
- The warts may be itchy.
- Many people have HPV but no warts can be seen.

How are genital warts spread?

Genital warts are passed by:

- having skin-on-skin contact or vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has HPV
- from mother to baby during birth.

Can genital warts be treated?

Yes, genital warts can be treated:

- by freezing the warts
- with creams or liquids
- by burning the warts with electrical heat or a laser.

After treatment:

- keep the treated area clean and dry
- bathe once a day in salty water (dry the treated area gently and thoroughly).

As the infection is caused by a virus, the treatment will not get rid of the virus (HPV). It will only remove the warts. The warts may come back in the future. For advice, testing and treatment visit your:

- student health clinic or school nurse
- sexual health clinic
- Family Planning clinic
- doctor or general practice.

What happens at the test for genital warts?

- The doctor or nurse will talk to you, examine you and then discuss treatment if it is necessary.
- If you have genital warts, you should also be checked for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Should I tell my sexual partner(s) that I am being treated for genital warts?

- Yes, your partner may need to be checked and treated if necessary.
- If you need help to tell any partner, speak to a doctor, nurse or sexual health counsellor.
- You could show your partner(s) this leaflet.

What about HPV and cancer?

Be smokefree! Smoking has been shown to work with HPV to increase the chance of abnormal cell growth or cancer.

Have regular cervical smears! Some types of HPV have been linked with abnormal cell changes on the cervix.

How can I protect myself from genital warts?

- Consider HPV vaccine. There are now vaccines available to protect against the HPV causing most cervical cancers. One vaccine provides protection against two types of HPV that cause genital warts. This vaccine is funded for young women aged 12–18 years. However, the vaccine is available to purchase for men and older women. Ask your doctor, nurse, or sexual health clinic for information.
- Continuous condom use in a relationship may offer some protection against the wart virus.
- However, you can still get the virus from skin-on-skin contact in the area surrounding the penis, vagina and anus, which is not protected by a condom.
- Always use a condom if you are having sex with a new or different partner.

How can I protect myself from STIs?

- Always use a condom. A condom is a thin latex or polyurethane sheath, which fits over the penis. A female condom is made of polyurethane and is inserted into the vagina. The condom collects the semen when a man comes and prevents it from entering the other person's body. Condoms make vaginal, anal and oral sex safer because they provide a barrier to prevent infection passing from person to person.
 - Always use an oral dam during oral sex. An oral dam is a thin square of latex that can be used as a protective layer between the mouth and vagina or anal areas during oral sex.
 - Immunisation protects against infections such as hepatitis A and B and HPV.
 - Never share drug-injecting equipment, eg, needles and syringes, spoons and filters.
- Some STIs are passed from person to person by skin-on-skin contact, and condoms or oral dams may not prevent this. So, it is important to be well informed about your sexual health. If you suspect you may have an STI, get it checked out.

How do I use a condom?

Check the condom pack to make sure the expiry date has not passed.

1 Open the packet carefully. Fingernails, rings and teeth can tear condoms. Make sure your penis does not touch your partner's vagina, mouth or anus before being covered by a condom.



2 Check that the condom is facing the right way. Pinch the top of the condom to remove any air.



3 Roll the condom on to the hard penis all the way down to the base. Use a water-based lubricant. Oil-based lubricants such as petroleum jelly can cause latex (rubber) condoms to break. Ask your pharmacist for advice about a suitable product.



4 After coming, and when withdrawing, hold the condom on to the base of the penis so that no semen gets spilt. Wrap the used condom in tissue or toilet paper and put it in the rubbish.



Use a new condom and lubricant each time you have sex!

Where can I get condoms?

You can get condoms and, sometimes, oral dams from your general practice, Family Planning and sexual health clinics. Condoms are also available from pharmacies, supermarkets, pubs, clubs and some dairies. Female condoms are available from Family Planning clinics.

Condoms will help to protect you and your partner(s) from STIs, although they do not guarantee prevention of STIs.

To be sure you don't have an STI, get tested at a Family Planning or sexual health clinic or your general practice.

Where can I find out more about STIs?

- Student health services at your university, polytechnic or school
- The public health nurse at your school
- Sexual health services listed in the white pages and at www.hpv.org.nz/help/where.htm
- Family Planning on 0800 INFOLINE (0800 4636 5463) or at www.fpanz.org.nz
- Your general practice doctor or nurse
- www.hpv.org.nz or Herpes/HPV Helpline 0508 11 12 13
- Healthline 0800 611 116.

The four guides

- 1 What is gonorrhoea? Code HE1442
- 2 What is genital herpes? Code HE1443
- 3 What are genital warts? Code HE1444
- 4 What are STI tests? Code HE1445

See also *Chlamydia: Information Guide* Code HP4609

New Zealand Government



This resource is available from www.healthed.govt.nz or the Authorised Provider at your DHB.

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