

Genital and Anal Warts

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Genital and anal warts are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the United States. HPV infection can cause genital warts and can eventually lead to cancer.

Symptoms

Most people with HPV do not have warts or other symptoms. If warts are present on the genital or anal areas, they look like fleshy bumps. Warts can also be hidden on the cervix, in the vagina or in the anus. When present, genital and anal warts may cause itching.

Prevention

The best way to prevent genital and anal warts is with the HPV vaccine.

The HPV vaccine is recommended for:

- Children ages 9 through 12
- Adolescents and young adults who did not finish the HPV vaccine series when they were younger
- People up to age 26 who were not previously vaccinated
- Some adults ages 27 through 45 who were not previously vaccinated

Adolescents who start the series younger than age 15 should receive two shots at least six months apart. Anyone who starts the series at age 15 or older will require three shots given over six months. Condoms and dental dams can lower the chance of spreading HPV, but HPV can still infect areas not covered by the condom or dental dam.

Testing

Your health care provider can tell by looking whether you have genital or anal warts. There is no clinical blood test to see if you have been exposed to HPV.

Treatment

Treatment depends on the size, number and location of the warts. Warts can be removed with medicated creams and liquids, freezing with liquid nitrogen, surgery or laser treatment.

Why Get Treatment

If not treated, genital warts may grow larger, bleed, and cause pain and itching. Sometimes, genital and anal warts clear on their own without treatment.

Sex Partners

If you are diagnosed with genital or anal warts, tell your current sex partner(s) so they can be evaluated for warts and other STIs and treated appropriately. There is currently no widely available test to tell whether someone without visible warts or other symptoms has HPV. Encourage your sex partner(s) to get the HPV vaccine if they are eligible.

Genital and Anal Warts and Pregnancy

During pregnancy, genital and anal warts may grow more quickly. The risk to the baby is small, but you should tell your health care provider that you are pregnant when you seek treatment for genital or anal warts.



New York City Sexual Health Clinics provide confidential, low- to no-cost services including STI and HIV testing.

To find a clinic, visit **nyc.gov/health/clinics**.