

Genital Warts

What is it?

Genital warts, or Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), is a sexually transmitted infection caused by strains of the human papillomavirus. The disease spreads through unprotected sex. Symptoms include small bumps on the genitals which can cause pain, discomfort and itching.

Treatment helps to get rid of symptoms and prevent them from coming back, but it can't cure the virus. Still, most people are able to clear HPV from their system in around two years.

Some strains of the virus can cause cell changes in the cervix which eventually lead to cervical cancer. That's why women with HPV need regular pap smears and ongoing monitoring. While the HPV vaccine helps to prevent 90% of cases of genital warts, it isn't effective if you already have the virus.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will talk to you about treatment options. There are a range of treatments, including creams, liquid nitrogen (cryotherapy) and surgical treatment. Your GP can help you decide on the most suitable treatment. No treatment is also an option, as symptoms can disappear on their own.

Your GP will also:

- Arrange a pap smear if necessary
- Test for other sexually transmitted infections
- Give you advice about telling your partners
- Give you preventive strategies
- Arrange a follow-up review

You can ask for a referral to a sexual health clinic if you are feeling worried, or if you would prefer to be managed by a specialist.

Your GP may recommend a referral if your symptoms are extensive, or if you are:

- Unsure about your diagnosis
- Pregnant
- Diabetic
- HIV positive

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will see you for a follow-up appointment to check the progress of your treatment. If your treatment isn't working, or if you aren't able to tolerate it, you may need to try something else.

Following up until there are no visible symptoms can decrease the chance of the symptoms coming back.

You will also be given the results of any other tests, including pap smears and tests for other sexually transmitted infections.

Genital Warts

What can I do?

Practice safe sex, and ask your GP about what is safe until your symptoms have been treated. Make sure to follow any instructions about treatment and aftercare.

Follow up with your GP to check the progress of any treatment. If you have relapses, see your GP for further treatment.

Schedule a pap smear if you haven't already, and make a note of dates for future pap tests.

It's normal to feel anxious, but try not to worry. Treatment will get rid of your symptoms, and most people with genital warts can clear the virus eventually.



What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Are there any other causes for my symptoms?
- Should I be tested for other STIs?
- What treatment do I need?
- How long will it take to get better?
- Am I contagious?
- Should my partner be tested?
- When can I have sex again?
- Will my genital warts come back?



What supports are available?

Liverpool Sexual Health Clinic

The Liverpool Sexual Health Clinic offers private testing and diagnosis. The clinic also provides medication if you are, or may be, at risk of HIV. This medicine, called PEP, may prevent HIV if taken 72 hours after potential exposure. As well as helping you with contact tracing, staff can help you manage and cope with your STI diagnosis.

You can either ask your GP to refer you or contact the clinic directly.

- Address: Ground Floor, 13 Elizabeth Street, Liverpool
- Phone: **9827 8022**

Where can I learn more?

If you'd like to learn more about genital warts, the following resources can help:

- **STIPU** - genital warts factsheet: stipu.nsw.gov.au
- **Health Translations** — includes multilingual resources: healthtranslations.vic.gov.au

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs