



## Genital warts

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While every effort has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication, it cannot replace medical advice. Please visit a health professional if you have any concerns with your health. Included below is a list of places where you can get more information.

### What are genital warts?

Genital warts are small lumps on the genitals which you can see or feel, but are usually painless. They are caused by the genital wart virus (Human Papilloma Virus or HPV). Genital warts can be on the vagina, vulva, cervix, anus or penis, and sometimes in the mouth or throat. They're different from the warts you can get on your hands and knees.

### How do you get genital warts?

You catch genital warts by having sex with someone who has the genital wart virus, even if you can't see any warts. It can take many weeks, months, or even years before any genital warts show. Genital warts are very easy to catch and pass on to your partners. Genital warts are very common. Most sexually active people have probably been exposed to the virus, but never get genital warts.

### How do I know if I have genital warts?

The doctor can check for genital warts and any other sexually transmitted infection (STI). Your partner should also be checked. Genital warts may not always be obvious, such as when they occur on the cervix (the neck of the womb) or inside the urethra (the tube leading out from the bladder).

### What do I do if I have genital warts?

If you see or feel unusual lumps on your genitals, or if you have had sex with someone who has genital warts, then see a GP or a doctor of your choice.

### How do I get treated?

Your doctor can treat genital warts in several ways, and will tell you the best one for you:

- podophyllotoxin paint (not suitable for pregnant women)
- cryotherapy (warts are frozen off with liquid nitrogen)
- imiquimod cream (not suitable for pregnant women)
- laser treatment
- surgical removal.

Don't use lotions made for other types of warts.

All sexual partners should be checked, and treated if they have genital warts.

Don't have sex when you have genital warts you can see or feel.

Avoid sex during the treatment period. Use condoms with your regular partner for 6 months after treatment as this is when genital warts are most likely to return.





## How do I reduce the risks of getting genital warts?

The safest ways to protect against genital warts and other STIs are:

- Have a long-term relationship where neither of you is already infected, and neither of you has other partners
- Always use condoms with water-based lubricant. Genital warts are passed on by direct skin-to-skin contact. Condoms reduce the risk, but they only protect the area of skin covered by the condom. Condoms are still the best way of protecting you against other STIs. Use dental dams during oral sex
- Limit your sex partners. The fewer people you have sex with, the less chance of having sex with someone who has genital warts or other STIs
- Have regular STI check-ups.

## Is there a vaccination against genital warts?

There is now a vaccine that protects women and girls against some genital warts and cervical cancer. Talk to your GP or doctor your choice about it.

## Pap smears

Some HPV infections (not the same ones that cause warts) can develop into genital cancers in both men and women. All sexually active women aged under 70 should have regular Pap smears to test for cervical cancer, even if they have been vaccinated.

## Where can I find more information on genital warts?

For further information contact your GP, a doctor of your choice, telephone Health Direct (1800 022 222) or the Sexual Health Helpline (9227 6178 for metropolitan callers or 1800 198 205 for country callers).

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[http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/409/2/genital\\_warts\\_f.pm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/409/2/genital_warts_f.pm)

