



GENITAL WARTS

What Are Genital Warts?

Genital warts are growths that appear on the skin around your vagina or rectum. They may be flat and white. They may be very small and feel like a little bump on your skin. They may be very large and look and feel like a small cauliflower.

How Do You Get Genital Warts?

Genital warts are a sexually transmitted disease. You get them from having sex with someone who has the virus that causes the warts to grow.

Are Warts a Virus Like the Flu?

Yes, warts are caused by a virus. The human papilloma virus, or HPV, causes warts. Unlike the flu, once you get HPV, the virus can stay in your body even if you don't have warts that you can see.

Are Warts Dangerous?

There are over 100 kinds of HPV. Almost half of all the people in the United States have one of the types of HPV. For most people, HPV and the warts it causes are not a problem. A few kinds of HPV can be a problem for women. These kinds of HPV may cause cancer of the cervix—the mouth of the womb. If you have an annual Pap test, you can find out if you have HPV. You also can find out if the kind of HPV you have can cause cancer. If you have one of the kinds of HPV that can cause cancer, your health care provider may suggest that you have more tests or treatments to get rid of any abnormal cells on your cervix. It will be very important that you get a Pap test every year if you have HPV.

How Do You Get Rid of Warts?

Even though you cannot get rid of the HPV virus, there are ways to get rid of the warts that you can see and feel. If you have warts, talk with your health care provider about ways to treat the warts. If you have a lot of warts, your health care provider may use a mild acid to burn the warts off. This should not hurt. It can take several acid treatments to get rid of the warts. If you have just a few warts or your warts have been mostly removed with acid, your health care provider might give you a cream to put on the warts at night for several weeks to remove them completely. You may find that even without treatment the warts go away. Remember, even when you can't see the warts, you will still have HPV.

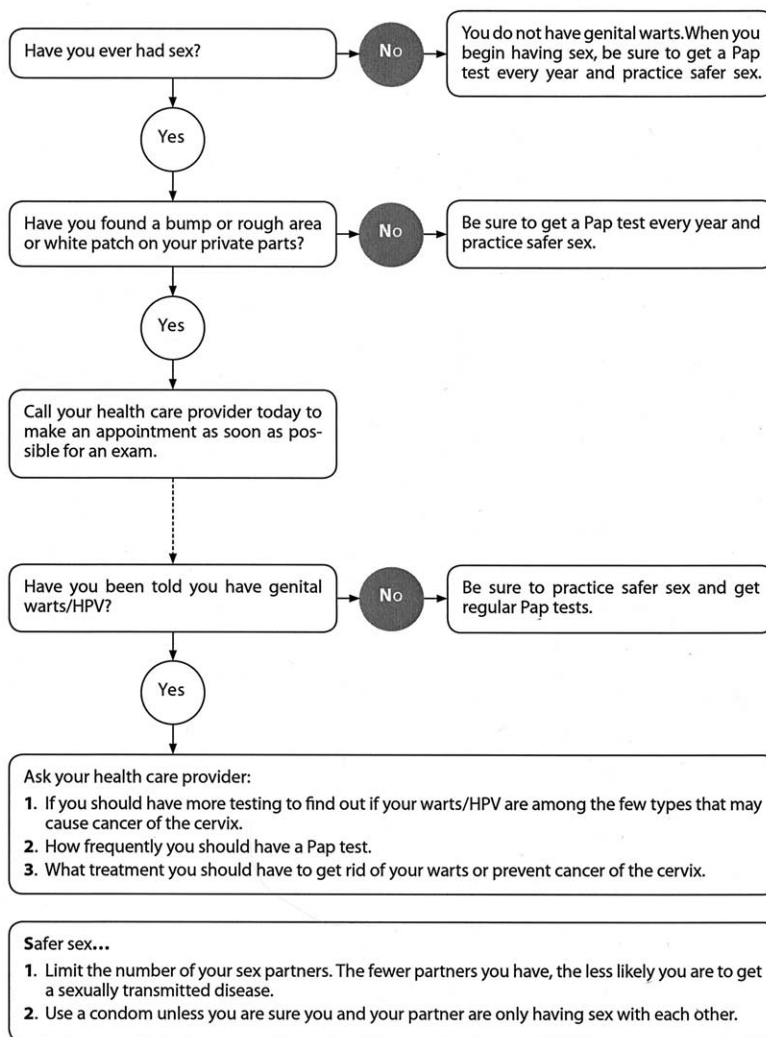
How Can I Avoid Getting Warts?

Because a person gets HPV by having sex, the only way to be sure to not get HPV is to never have sex. If you are having sex, it is a good idea to limit the number of sex partners you have. If you have sex with only one person, and that person is only having sex with you, then that also lowers your chance of getting warts or any other sexually transmitted infection. You also can use condoms. Using condoms made from latex and having only one sexual partner will help you avoid getting HPV and the warts it causes.

How Can I Avoid Getting Cancer on My Cervix if I Have Warts?

Pap tests can find early signs of abnormal cells before cancer appears. You need to get Pap tests every year. Women who smoke cigarettes are more likely to get abnormal cells on their cervix. Although it is very hard to do, stopping smoking is the most important thing you can do to avoid getting cancer.

Genital Warts – What to do?



For More Information

The Web site of the American Social Health Association has excellent consumer-focused information on many sexually transmitted diseases including the most up-to-date research and treatments. <http://www.ashastd.org>

Web MD is an excellent general health information Web site with great information on a wide variety of topics. For information on genital warts, search “genital warts” or “HPV.” <http://www.webmd.com>

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