

What are Genital Warts?

Genital warts are caused by a virus. The virus affects the skin of the penis, vagina and anus. It can cause warts, which are like those that grow on other parts of the body.

Don't panic if you have genital warts - they are very common!

What are the symptoms?

Often the warts are small and very difficult to see - you may not even know you have them.

The warts are small, fleshy lumps. You might see or feel them, or your partner might notice them. They can be flat, smooth, small bumps, or quite large, pink, cauliflower-like lumps. They may itch, but they don't usually hurt.

In women, genital warts grow on the skin around the vagina, at the opening of the vagina and around the anus. They sometimes grow inside the vagina and on the cervix (the neck of the womb).

In men, genital warts grow on the tip of the penis and around the anus (back passage).

How are the warts passed on?

The virus can be passed by skin-to-skin contact with genital warts. They are usually passed on during sex.

If you have sex with someone who has genital warts, you may get them too.

How is it diagnosed?

A doctor will usually be able to diagnose the warts just by looking at them. Many people with warts also have other infections, even if they have no other symptoms. So it's probably a good idea to have a full sexual-health check-up.

Where can it be treated?

If you think you have an infection or you have any worries about your sexual health, you can make an appointment with your GP or at a genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinic.

The GUM clinic is run by friendly, specially-trained staff who give free confidential advice and treatment. You don't need to see your GP first, just phone to make an appointment yourself. Your nearest clinic is:

***Genitourinary Medicine
The Sandyford Initiative
2 - 6 Sandyford Place
Sauchiehall Street
Glasgow
G3 7NB***

Tel: 0141 211 8601

How are Genital Warts treated?

Genital warts cannot be treated with antibiotics. However, there are other treatments that can help to get rid of the warts.

These are some of the treatments. The doctor will choose the one that is best for you.

- Podophyllin paint is often used to treat warts. A doctor or nurse will paint it on the warts every one or two weeks until they disappear.
- Freezing the warts with liquid nitrogen.
- Laser treatment or surgery. (These treatments are less common.)

Remember that you should not treat genital warts with the treatments you can get from the chemist. The skin around the genitals is very sensitive and you could burn yourself.

Will the treatment hurt?

Most people cope with the treatment well. However, sometimes people feel a bit uncomfortable for a day or two. If you do feel sore, having a warm bath can sometimes help.

You should not use scented soap, bath oils or foams, vaginal deodorants, disinfectants or any cream or moisturisers, as they might sting. You should wear cotton underwear to keep you cool.

Will the Genital Warts come back?

Warts usually start to go after just a few treatments. Sometimes they can take several months to go completely. If they are treated properly, genital warts eventually disappear and do not usually come back. If they do the best thing to do is to get them treated as soon as possible.

Should I tell my partner?

If you have genital warts, you should talk to your partner about it. Your partner should make an appointment to see a doctor and have a check up, even if they do not think they have any warts. The nurse who treated your warts was If you have any concern or questions please contact the clinic on 0141 211 8601 between the hours of 8am and 4pm (8am - 8pm on certain days)