

# GENITAL WARTS INFORMATION SHEET

## What causes genital warts?

Warts of all types are caused by a certain type of virus. In adults, the virus causing genital warts is almost always acquired through sexual activity, although it is possible that it may in some cases be acquired non-sexually from warts located on the fingers. There is currently an epidemic of genital warts. It is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases. Because genital warts are usually acquired sexually, your doctor may recommend testing for other sexually transmitted diseases.

## Are these warts dangerous?

Some, but not all, wart viruses can cause cancer of the cervix in females and may rarely cause cancer of the penis or the anus in males. Cancer of the cervix is particularly dangerous because it may be widespread before it causes any symptoms. **Therefore, it is absolutely essential that your sexual partner be examined for genital warts and genital cancer.** Female sexual partners should see their gynecologist or primary physician.

Treatment will destroy the vast majority of the virus in your genital skin. However, even after treatment of all your genital warts, it is likely that small amounts of the virus will remain in your genital skin inaccessible to treatment. For this reason, it is advisable that you always wear a condom in order to protect an uninfected sexual partner.

## Treatment of genital warts

Your doctor will choose the most appropriate treatment option for your particular situation.

Podophyllin: This will be applied weekly until the warts are totally resolved, and may take many treatments. Leave it in place for 4-6 hours and then wash it off. However, if burning occurs before 4-6 hours, wash it off when burning is noted.

Aldera: Aldera is an immune system stimulating medicine that is applied to the warts every other night. Aldera often causes mild to moderate irritation. Continue to apply until the warts have resolved.

Freezing with liquid nitrogen: A blister will usually develop. Leave the blister in place. The fluid may be drained if it is too painful. The treatment will be repeated about every two weeks until all warts are resolved.

Freezing plus Aldera: Sometimes the above two therapies are combined. Follow the instruction for both.

Electrosurgery: An electric current is used to "burn" the warts away after numbing the wart with a local anesthetic. Unfortunately, injection of a local anesthetic into skin of the penis is quite painful and a scar may occur. Other treatments sometimes used include wart destruction with lasers or interferon. These treatments are very seldom needed. Interferon, in particular, has very unpleasant side effects.

## What should I do if I have pain after the treatment?

Pain may accompany any of the above treatments. This may be controlled with aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol), or ibuprofen.