

## TREATMENT OF GENITAL WARTS

Planned Parenthood Northern California 1-925-676-0300

**What are genital warts?**

Genital warts are a kind of virus that causes bumps on the skin that can look like small pieces of cauliflower. They are most common around the opening of the vagina and in the vagina, on the shaft or tip of the penis and on the scrotum, and on the skin around the anus. Rarely, they are found inside the rectum or urethra.

Most of the time there are no symptoms. Sometimes there is bleeding, burning, discomfort during sex, or itching.

Genital warts are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). The virus is spread from one person to another by skin touching skin — usually during anal, oral, or vaginal sex.

**Before getting treatment for genital warts, you need to know the most common benefits, risks, side effects, and other choices you have. We are happy to answer any questions you have.**

**How are genital warts treated?**

There are different ways to treat genital warts. Treatments include those done by a doctor or nurse and those you can do at home. Some may not be available here. Your doctor or nurse will help you decide which method is best for you.

Even if the warts go away with treatment, they may return. This is because the treatments can remove the warts, but they don't cure the virus that causes warts.

**What are the treatments done by a doctor or nurse?**

- **Bichloroacetic acid (BCA) and Trichloroacetic acid (TCA)** - Acid that is put on the warts to destroy them. They are usually put on once a week for several weeks.
  - It is a safe and effective way to treat warts.
  - It works well for about 6 out of 10 people
  - There may be mild scarring.
  - You may have burning for a few minutes after the acid is put on. You may also have mild redness, pain, itching or local swelling afterwards. It can take several weeks to completely heal.
- **Cryotherapy (freezing)** - A very cold spray is put on the warts to freeze and destroy them. Several treatments may be needed.
  - It is a safe and effective way to treat warts.
  - It works in more than 7 out of 10 people.
  - There may be mild scarring.
  - There is usually some mild burning when the cold is first put on the warts. After treatment, sores or blisters may form and cause mild discomfort or itching for several days.

**What are the treatments you can do at home?**

The medicines listed below are prescribed by your doctor or nurse for use at home. Follow the directions that come with them.

- Podophylox – A medicine that destroys the wart. Put it on 2 times a day for 3 days in a row. Then don't put any on for the next 4 days. You can repeat this one-week cycle until the warts are gone but no more than 4 times. It should not be used in pregnancy.
- Imiquimod – A cream that causes your immune system to clear up the warts. Put it on 3 times a week, for example, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, or Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. It is usually put on at bedtime. Wash it off 6 to 10 hours later. Use it until the warts are gone but for no longer than 16 weeks. It may weaken latex condoms and diaphragms. Safety in pregnancy is not known.
- Sinecatchin ointment – A cream that is made from green tea. Put it on 3 times a day. The medicine should not be washed off. Don't have sex while the cream is on the skin, or wash it off first and then put it back on when you're done. It may weaken latex condoms and diaphragms. Use it until the warts are gone, but for no longer than 16 weeks. Safety in pregnancy is not known.

**What else do I need to know about these medicines?**

- They are a safe and effective way to treat warts. You can use them yourself at home.
- They work in about 5 to 7 out of 10 people.
- Rarely, there is scarring of the skin or permanent discoloration where the medicine was used.
- You may have redness, pain, itching, sores, rash with blisters, or swelling for several weeks.

**What other choices do I have?**

You could choose to have no treatment. The body's immune system often kills the virus. If so, the warts go away on their own.

There are also other treatments for genital warts. They include destroying the warts with electricity or laser, or removing them with loop electrosurgical excision (LEEP).

We can talk about any of these options with you, and help you with whatever you decide to do.

**What else do I need to know?**

After your treatment you should

- Keep the area clean. Don't scratch it.
- Wash your hands after touching the warts.
- Not have sex if it is uncomfortable.
- Use cold compresses and/or take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to help with discomfort.

No promise can be made about the outcome of your treatment. In the unlikely event that you need emergency medical care that cannot be provided at Planned Parenthood, you will be responsible for paying for it. This is the case even if Planned Parenthood sends you to a hospital because of a problem.

**Your health is important to us.** If you have any questions or concerns, please call us. We are happy to help you.

**Call us right away at 1-800-454-9125 if you**

- Have a temperature of 100.4°F or higher that lasts more than 4 hours
- Have a bad odor or yellow discharge
- Have pain that doesn't go away with medicine
- Don't heal