

Genital Warts in Babies and Children

Genital warts are common skin-colored, often painless growths that appear in the genital area. In males, they can occur on the penis or around the rectum. In females, they can occur around the opening to the vagina or around the rectum. Genital warts are caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). These warts can be large or small. They can be flat and hard to see. Sometimes they can cause itching and irritation. They can grow rapidly.

In adolescents and adults, genital warts are often spread by sexual contact. However, young children often get them in other ways. Babies and children most often get genital warts:

- before or during birth (from the mother who has the virus)
- while having diapers changed (from the hands of someone with the virus)
- during bathing (from towels that have been used by someone with the virus)
- by spreading their own warts (from their hands to another part of the body).

Treatment

There are different treatments for genital warts. More than one treatment is often needed.

Freezing with liquid nitrogen: This is done in the dermatology office. The doctor carefully applies liquid nitrogen to the warts to freeze them. This often causes some irritation to the area within 24 to 48 hours. It can be uncomfortable or painful.

Topical medicine: Your child's doctor may prescribe a cream called imiquimod to put on the warts. This medicine has been approved for treating genital warts. It is applied every other night (3 times per week) and washed off in the morning. Other topical medicines may also be used to treat the warts.

Keeping warts from spreading: Make sure anyone who bathes or diapers your child knows that the child has genital warts. All caregivers should wash their hands well with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after:

- bathing the child
- diapering the child
- applying medicine.

If you have questions, be sure to ask your child's doctor or nurse. If anyone in the family is concerned about sexual abuse, please call the Child Assessment Center at the Center for Family Safety and Healing. The phone number is (614) 722-3278. They can talk to you and evaluate the situation. Though this is rare, **any concern** should be addressed right away.