

# GENESIS OB/GYN, INC.

## HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (HPV)

Like many viruses Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is highly contagious. HPV is sexually transmitted and causes "genital warts" or "condyloma". These warts often appear as tiny bumps in the genital area. If the warts are on the cervix or vagina, a woman may not even know that she has them.

**SYMPTOMS:** It may take a few months for the warts to be noticed, but sometimes it may even take years after exposure.

Small pink, red or gray warty growth may be on the female genitals or the skin between the vagina and rectum. They may be on the penis in men.

Both men and women may have them around the rectum or within the canal. Some warts are "flat" and though present, may not be noticed by the man or woman at all. In the vagina, the warts may cause discharge, itching or irritation.

**DIAGNOSIS:** The diagnosis is made by looking at the genital and rectal areas during the pelvic exam. A PAP test is done to examine the cells of the cervix for any signs of change. If the PAP test indicates anything abnormal, you may require a **colposcopy**. This magnifies the cervix to help in diagnosis. An exam with the colposcope feels like a regular pelvic exam and doesn't hurt. However, if a tissue biopsy is required, there may be some cramping for a few moments.

**RISKS:** Precancerous tissue changes (dysplasia) may occur when warts are present on the cervix. Warts on the cervix may cause no symptoms, but they may be found by PAP smear. This is why it is so important to have a PAP test every year and sometimes more often. Early diagnosis of dysplasia is very important so that treatment can be started before the changes progress to true cancer.

**TREATMENT:** One of the following treatments may be recommended for you and possibly your partner. However your partner will need to be examined by a urologist (a doctor who treats men for genital and urinary problems). Most procedures can be done quickly in the office but follow up treatments are often needed to eliminate the warts.

Trichloroacetic acid (TCA): chemical applied to the wart destroying the cells. It will cause a burning sensation.

F-Fluorouracil (5 FU): Cream used for warts inside the vagina and urethra. It is used once or twice per week for 2-5 weeks. This cannot be used during pregnancy.

Cryosurgery: Freezing of the wart tissue. This is quick treatment and relatively painless for both internal and external warts.

Condylox: Cream applied to external warts at home containing a chemical called Podophyllin. This cannot be used during pregnancy.

Laser therapy: A relatively new treatment which burns internal and external warts.

Although the warts may be eliminated, the virus is still dormant in your body. For this reason, follow up with PAP tests is very important to detect any precancerous changes in your cervix.

It is important to know that this virus can be very difficult to eradicate. Some studies show that even with laser (the most aggressive form of therapy), there is up to an 80-90% risk that the warts may return. For this reason, we have concentrated on removing it from the cervix as the highest priority. It may not be possible to completely rid the whole genital tract from this virus.

**PRACTICE SAFE SEX:** Because genital warts is a sexually transmitted disease, you will limit any chance of spreading the virus if you follow safe sex practices. A condom with spermicide helps prevent infection from HPV as well as other sexually transmitted diseases, although it is not perfect. Your best protection is a mutually monogamous relationship with your partner.