

## **HPV FACT SHEET**

### **Genital warts are caused by a virus**

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is the virus that causes genital warts. There are many different types of HPV. Genital warts are different from warts found on the hands or feet.

### **Infection with HPV is spread by sexual contact or from mother to baby**

HPV infection is spread from person to person through direct skin contact during vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has genital warts. A baby can get the virus if the mother has genital warts at the time of delivery.

### **Genital warts look like small bumps or cauliflower-like clusters on the external (outside) or internal (inside) genitals**

- Genital warts appear 6 weeks to 8 months after contact with an HPV infected person. Since genital warts can occur on the internal genitals, they may be hard to see. Sometimes the infection doesn't cause any warts, and many people with HPV do not know they have it.
- It is very important for women to have Pap smears done on a regular basis to make certain that no problems have been caused by HPV.

### **Genital warts can be treated by a doctor. Methods to remove genital warts are:**

- Freezing the warts with liquid nitrogen
- Using electrical heat (cautery)
- Using laser therapy
- Applying certain chemicals

Even though warts are removed, some of the virus may stay alive in the skin and cause more warts. This means that more than one treatment may be needed to get rid of the warts permanently. -Do not use drugstore treatments for warts on sensitive genital skin.

HPV can affect the cervix of women. Women who have had genital warts or HPV should see their doctors for Pap smears to monitor any changes that may occur, because these women may have an increased risk of cervical cancer.

### **Genital warts can be prevented**

- Avoid infection by abstaining from sex, or by only having sex with one person who only has sex with you.
- Use a condom when having sex.

### **Pregnant women who have genital warts should tell their doctor**

Genital warts can cause problems during pregnancy and childbirth. A woman with genital warts can have her baby normally as long as the warts do not block the birth canal.

**Persons who think that they or their partners have genital warts should not have sex until they are examined by a doctor**

**Persons with genital warts should tell their partners so that they can also be examined by a doctor**

**Persons with genital warts should not have sex until their doctor says it is okay**