

screening test, also known as a pap-smear, at least every 5 years.

All sexually active women under 70 should have regular cervical screening tests for HPV, even if they have been vaccinated.

Where to go

Confidential tests and treatment are available from your GP or a doctor of your choice or you could visit one of these metropolitan health services.

Most are free, please telephone first to see if you need an appointment:

South Terrace Clinic

Fremantle Hospital
South Terrace, Fremantle
Phone: 9431 2149

Royal Perth Hospital

Sexual health services
Wellington Street, Perth
Phone: 9224 2178

Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ)

70 Roe Street, Northbridge
Phone: 9227 6177 or
1800 198 205 – free call from landlines and some mobiles

Women's Health and Family Services

227 Newcastle Street, Northbridge
Phone: 6330 5400 or
1800 998 399 – free call from landlines and some mobiles

Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service

156 Wittenoom Street, Perth
Phone: 9421 3888

And some regional population health units and Aboriginal community controlled health services.

For more information contact

Healthdirect Australia 1800 022 222

Sexual Health Helpline

Phone: 9227 6178 or 1800 198 205 – free call from landlines and some mobiles

www.healthywa.wa.gov.au

www.couldihaveit.com.au

Regional Population Health Units

(Those in bold provide clinical services)

Albany	9842 7500
Broome	9194 1630
Bunbury	9781 2350
Carnarvon	9941 0500
Geraldton	9956 1980
Kalgoorlie-Boulder	9080 8200
Northam	9690 1720
South Hedland	9174 1660

Front cover image: Laboratory of Tumor Virus Biology



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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Government of Western Australia
Department of Health
Public and Aboriginal Health Division

Your sexual health Genital warts



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What are genital warts?

Genital warts are small lumps on the genitals which you can see or feel, but are usually painless.

They are caused by the genital wart virus (human papillomavirus or HPV).

Genital warts can be on the vagina, vulva, cervix, anus or penis, and sometimes in the mouth or throat. They're caused by different strains of HPV to those that cause warts on knees, hands and other parts of the body.

How is it spread?

You catch genital warts by having sex with someone who has the genital wart virus, even if you can't see any warts. It can take many weeks, months, or even years before any genital warts show.

Genital warts are very easy to catch and pass on to your partners.

Genital warts are very common. Most sexually active people have probably been exposed to the virus, but never get genital warts.

Checking it out

The doctor can check for genital warts and any other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Your partner should also be checked.

Genital warts may not always be obvious, such as when they occur on the cervix (the neck of the womb) or inside the urethra (the tube leading out from the bladder).

If you see or feel unusual lumps on your genitals, or if you have had sex with someone who has genital warts, then see a GP or a doctor of your choice. As with many STI's, you may have genital warts and not

know it, so it is good to get tested for STI's regularly if you have had or are having sex without a condom, even if you don't have any symptoms

Treatment

Your doctor can treat genital warts in several ways, and will tell you the best one for you:

- podophyllotoxin (not suitable for pregnant women)
- cryotherapy (warts are frozen off with liquid nitrogen)
- imiquimod (not suitable for pregnant women)
- laser treatment
- surgical removal.

Don't use lotions made for other types of warts.

All sexual partners should be checked, and treated if they have genital warts.

Don't have sex when you have genital warts you can see or feel.

Avoid sex during the treatment period. Use condoms with your regular partner for 6 months after treatment as this is when genital warts are most likely to return.

Feelings

People who have genital warts may feel embarrassed, depressed or anxious. Talk about it with your doctor, a counsellor, or others who have the same problem (try one of the services listed on the back page).

Treatment

Protecting yourself and your partner.

The safest ways to protect against genital warts and other STIs are to:

- **have a long-term relationship** where neither of you has genital warts, and neither of you has other sexual partners.
- **always use condoms with water-based lubricant, or dental dams for oral sex.** Genital warts are passed on by direct skin-to-skin contact. Condoms/dental dams reduce the risk, but **they only protect the area of skin covered by the condom/dental dams.** Condoms are still the best way of protecting you against other STIs.
- **limit your sexual partners.** The fewer people you have sex with, the less chance of having sex with someone who has genital warts or other STIs.
- **have regular STI check-ups.**

Vaccination

There is now a vaccine that protects against some genital warts and cancers, such as cervical cancer. This vaccination is offered to all year 8 school children. If you haven't had a vaccination for HPV, ask your GP about how to get one.

Cervical screening

Some HPV infections (not the same ones that cause warts on other parts of your body, such as your hands) can develop into genital cancers in both men and women.

See your GP to discuss this if you have any concerns. Women are advised to have a cervical