



BC Centre for Disease Control
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Genital Wart (HPV) Treatment

Treatment for genital warts caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV) is primarily for aesthetic purposes and may also help reduce symptoms. Treatment does not cure the virus itself. Most genital warts will resolve without treatment within 18 to 24 months.

There are several methods available to treat genital warts, depending on location and nature of warts, as well as personal choice and availability of treatment. Please discuss with your healthcare provider, to help you decide whether to have treatment and if so, which treatment option is best for you.

Individuals and their partner(s) may choose to continue to be sexually active while undergoing treatment. They may choose to abstain while undergoing treatment. They may also choose to use condoms. Condoms provide protection against many sexually transmitted infections, though they do not fully protect against HPV.

Treatment Options

Defer treatment and monitor

- Many genital warts will resolve spontaneously

Clinician-applied treatments

- First choice: Cryotherapy with liquid nitrogen; see page 2
- Alternate treatment:
 - Podophyllin liquid (Podophyllum 10%); see page 3
 - Trichloroacetic acid (TCA): discuss with healthcare provider

Self-applied treatments (prescription required)

- Imiquimod 3.75% or 5% cream (Aldara®P)
- Sinecatechins (green tea extract) 10% ointment (Veregen®)
- Podofilox 0.5% solution (Condyline®)
- For more information, discuss with your healthcare provider

CAUTION

Over-the-counter wart or skin tag removal remedies such as salicylic acid (Compound W®, Dr Scholl's®), and/or tea tree oil are **not** recommended for the treatment of genital warts.

Information about HPV

For general information about human papilloma virus (HPV), including genital warts and HPV vaccine, see **SmartSexResource** [HPV Brochure](#).

Genital Wart Treatment (cont'd)

Cryotherapy with Liquid Nitrogen (LN2)

- Cryotherapy with liquid nitrogen (LN2) involves applying a very cold substance to the anal/genital wart(s).
- This is the recommended clinician-applied treatment for genital warts.
- **How it works:**
Liquid nitrogen creates mild inflammation (redness, swelling & irritation) that activates the body's defense system to recognize and help clear the genital wart (HPV) infection more quickly
- **Expected Treatment Response:**
 - Blistering in 1 to 2 hours
 - Scab formation in 2 to 3 days
 - Scab sloughs off in 7 to 10 days
- For best results, treatments should be done every 1 to 2wks, for up to 6-8 treatments

Pregnancy and Chest/Breastfeeding

- Liquid nitrogen treatment is safe to use during pregnancy and chest/breastfeeding.

Side Effects

- Cryotherapy with liquid nitrogen is well tolerated by most people
- You may experience mild, temporary redness, swelling, and burning of the wart and surrounding skin
- Treated areas may become lighter (hypo-pigmented) or darker (hyper-pigmented), depending upon the person's skin type and treatment response. Most skin colour changes will return to normal within a few weeks although occasionally some skin colour changes may be permanent

Recommended Aftercare

- Shower or bath normally
- Avoid shaving or waxing the affected areas as this may cause further spreading; trimming with scissors or an electric razor is an option
- If treated areas are still healing, consider delaying your follow-up visit to a later date and inform your healthcare provider of your treatment response at the next visit.

Genital Wart Treatment (cont'd)

Podophyllin Resin (Podophyllum 10%)

- Podophyllin is a root extract that is applied by a clinician, to **external** anal/genital warts
- It is an **alternate treatment** that should only be used if other options are not available, as it is less effective, can harm healthy skin cells, and can be absorbed through the skin
- **How it works:**
Podophyllin is a topical toxin that stops the cellular multiplication of the HPV virus.
- **Expected Treatment Response:**
Redness and slight irritation of the treated genital wart lesions
- Podophyllin can be applied in weekly intervals for up to 6 treatment sessions.

CAUTION

- Podophyllin should **not** be used if you have diabetes or any conditions affecting circulation
- **External use only:** do not use on internal genital warts (that is, warts located inside the vagina, anus or urethral opening).
- Do not use on non-intact skin such as open or bleeding genital warts
- Do not use on moles or birthmarks
- Maximum skin area to be treated is 5cm² area or less

Pregnancy, Chest/Breastfeeding

- Podophyllin is **not** recommended for use in pregnancy and chest/breastfeeding

Side Effects

- You may experience mild to moderate local skin reactions such as redness discomfort, tenderness, numbness, stinging, burning or pain at the site. Blistering, ulcerations, and itching may also occur.
- If you experience easy bruising or bleeding, weakness, severe stomach cramps or constipation, severe skin reactions, mental health changes, or any unusual effects, notify your healthcare provider immediately.

Genital Wart Treatment (cont'd)

Podophyllin Resin (Podophyllum 10%)

Recommended Aftercare

- First treatment: it is very important to wash the treated area with mild soap and warm water **1 hour after** application to remove the podophyllin from the skin, and allow to air dry.
- As podophyllin is very caustic, wash your hands well. Keep away from the eyes.
- Follow-up treatments: wash the treated area **4 to 6 hours after** application or sooner if needed
- If you have intense burning, pain, open sores or bleeding of any treated areas, immediately wash the area and inform your healthcare provider at your next visit.
- If the treated areas are still open or oozing, call and delay your follow-up visit to a later date. Inform your healthcare provider of your treatment response at the next visit.
- Shower or bath normally
- Avoid shaving or waxing the affected areas as this may cause further spreading; trimming with scissors or an electric razor is an option.

If you have any questions or need more information,
please visit www.smartsexresource.com or contact your healthcare provider.