



Diseases Fact Sheet - Venereal Warts

South Dakota Department of Health

Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)

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What is it?

Venereal warts are a fairly common sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by a specific virus that affects the skin or mucus membranes. The virus usually causes cauliflower-like fleshy growths in moist areas in and around the sex organs.

Who gets venereal warts?

Any sexually active person can be infected with venereal warts. Most often, venereal warts are found in young (age 15 to 30 years) people who have multiple sex partners. Those whose immune systems are compromised are more likely to become infected and to have a more serious infection than others.

How are venereal warts spread?

Venereal warts are generally spread through sexual contact, but can also be spread from mother to child (usually found in the child's throat or mouth) during birth.

What are the symptoms of venereal warts?

Venereal warts appear as soft, fleshy growth that vary in size, are frequently painless and can be raised, pointed or flat. The warts may appear singly or in clusters.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear about two to four months after exposure.

When and for how long is a person able to spread venereal warts?

The infected person is contagious for as long as warts are evident. An infected person may be able to transmit the infection even after successful treatment of the wart.

Does past infection make a person immune?

No. Previous infection with warts does not make a person immune from repeat infection.



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What is the treatment for venereal warts?

Warts can be treated by a chemical called podophyllin or by surgical removal. In some cases, warts may be "frozen" and removed by a process called cryosurgery.

What can be the effect of not being treated for venereal warts?

If a person is not treated, the warts will very likely continue to grow and spread. There is an association between this specific virus and some genital or rectal cancers.

What can be done to prevent the spread of venereal warts?

There are a number of ways to prevent the spread of venereal warts:

- Limit your number of sex partners.
- Use a condom.
- Carefully wash genitals after sexual relations.
- If you think you are infected, avoid any sexual contact and visit your local STD clinic, a hospital or your doctor.
- Notify all sexual contacts immediately so they can obtain examination and treatment.