Anogenital warts

Information for parents and carers

Child Sexual Assault Assessment Centre

For more information, please contact:

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Caring with pride
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What are anogenital warts?

Anogenital warts (AGW) are small fleshy growths, bumps or skin changes that appear on or around the genital or anal area. A person can have a single wart or a cluster of warts and can take on a ‘cauliflower’ appearance.

In children, it is not known how long it takes for warts to develop after infection with the virus (see below).

Warts are usually painless and do not cause any harm to a child or young person’s health. However, they can be unpleasant to look at and can cause psychological distress or worry.

What causes anogenital warts?

Anogenital warts are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV).

HPV is not a single virus; there are many different strains of virus. Most cases of genital warts are caused by two strains of the virus; type 6 and 11.
How are anogenital warts passed on?

In children there are four ways that anogenital warts can be passed from person to person (transmitted):

1. An infected mother can pass AGW on to her baby during birth if she has a vaginal delivery;
2. Someone with HPV warts on their hands could pass on an infection by touching the genital area;
3. Contact from objects or surfaces where the virus is present, although this is very unusual;
4. Sexual contact.

What is the treatment for anogenital warts?

If the warts are itchy or causing discomfort, then treatment can be offered. In most cases the doctor will prescribe a cream called Imiquimod or Aldara. The cream should be carefully applied to the warts, usually three times a week for a maximum of 16 weeks.

The nurse and doctor will explain to you how to apply the cream, and you will be given some instructions to take away with you.

In some cases, no treatment is needed.
Why is a referral made to Children’s Social Care?

Anogenital warts can be transmitted in a number of ways. When a child is diagnosed with an infection that can be sexually transmitted, the possibility of sexual abuse has to be considered.

It is recommended by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (the UK professional body for paediatricians) that a full assessment should be carried out. This assessment is carried out by a specially trained children’s doctor on all children with anogenital warts. The assessment will be done in partnership with Children’s Social Care. This is to ensure the child/young person is safe and protected from abuse.

After the examination, the doctor will complete a medical report and a copy of the report is sent to the child’s/young person’s social worker. The report will be shared with your General Practitioner.

We understand that this may be upsetting for a parent/carer. You can expect to be listened to and supported throughout this process.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the nurse, doctor or social worker.
Why do I need to come to the Acorn Unit?

The Acorn Unit is a specialist unit at York Hospital where children can be examined and treated by a specially trained doctor. The doctor will ask about your child’s health in general. They may undertake a top to toe examination, which will include an examination of the genital area. The doctor may use a magnifying torch called a colposcope to examine this area and to confirm if anogenital warts are present. A swab may be taken. The examination should not hurt.

Many children and young people are nervous about being examined. The doctors and nurses understand this and will take time to explain what is going to happen and will help and support your child.

The doctor will prescribe the appropriate treatment if it is needed and will arrange any follow up appointments if required.

All procedures and investigations that are undertaken will be explained to you. If at any time you feel that you do not understand the purpose of a procedure, please ask the nurse or doctor for further explanation.
Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: Liz Costello, Lead Nurse, CSAAC, Acorn Suite, Children’s Assessment Unit, Ward 18, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 721813.

Teaching, Training and Research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.
Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format

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