Anal Warts

Stanford University Section Of Colon And Rectal Surgery

Anal Warts

- Also called condyloma acuminata.
- Affects the area around the anus and skin of the genital area.
- First appears as pin-point blemishes and may grow larger than a pea.
- Are usually painless and goes unnoticed.
- Caused by the contagious human papilloma virus which is transmitted from person to person by direct contact.

Warts Should Be Removed

- If the warts are not removed, they generally grow larger and become more numerous.
- There is evidence that these warts can become cancerous if left untreated for a long time.

Treatment Of Warts

Medication:

- Used when warts are very small and are located only on the skin around the anus.
- Physician applies medication with great precision directly to the surface of the warts to prevent injury to the normal skin surrounding the warts.
- Usually require several applications performed at various intervals over several weeks.

Electrical Cautery, surgical removal or a combination of the two:

- Offers more rapid destruction of the warts
- Laser surgery may also be used but has no advantage over other treatments.
- Provide immediate results but must be performed using a local anesthetic or a general or spinal anesthetic, depending on the number and exact location of warts being treated.
- Warts inside the anal canal usually are not suitable for treatment with medication and in most cases need to be treated by cauterization or surgical removal.

Time to recovery for cautery and excision technique:

Usually performed on an outpatient-basis, and the patient can go home afterwards. Most are moderately uncomfortable for a few days after treatment, and may require prescription pain medication. Depending on the extent of disease, some people return to work within 1 to 7 days.
Will a single treatment cure the problem?

Not in most cases. Even with the cautery and surgical treatments that immediately destroy existing warts, many patients develop new warts after treatment. This occurs because viruses that cause the warts can live concealed in tissues that appear normal for up to six months or longer before another wart develops. New warts will often develop from the virus that was already present in the tissue, but these are not recurrences of warts already treated. As new warts develop, they can often be treated in the physician's office, using either a chemical solution or the electrical cautery procedure. These treatments are performed every few weeks initially, then less frequently as new warts shrink in size and number. Then again, sometimes, new warts develop so rapidly that office treatment would be quite uncomfortable. In these situations, a second and occasionally third outpatient surgical visit may be recommended. Follow-up visits are necessary for several months after the last wart is observed to be certain that no more warts occur from viruses living in the cells of skin.

Recurrence Of Warts

In some cases, warts may recur repeatedly after successful removal, since the virus that causes the warts often persists in a dormant state in body tissues. Below are tips to AVOID recurrence and re-infection:

- Continue observation for several months after the last wart has been spotted to improve the chances that both the warts and the underlying virus that causes them have been eliminated.
- Abstain from sexual contact with individuals who have anal (or genital) warts. Since many individuals may be unaware that they suffer from this condition, sexual abstinence or limiting sexual contact to monogamous relationships will reduce your potential exposure to the contagious virus that causes these warts. As a precaution, sexual partners ought to be checked, even if they have no symptoms.

Adapted from the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons

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