

Anal Warts

What are anal warts?

Anal warts develop around the anus and genital area. They can affect the skin both on the outside and the inside of the anus.

What causes anal warts?

Most anal warts are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). This is usually transmitted by person-to-person contact and as such is often regarded as a sexually transmitted disease. You do not necessarily have to have had anal intercourse to develop anal warts.

People who are immunosuppressed are at greater risk of developing anal warts. People may be immunosuppressed because they are taking drugs to suppress their immune systems such as transplant patients. Other causes of immune suppression include HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection.

What symptoms do anal warts cause?

Many patients may be unaware that they have warts present. The principle symptoms are:

- Raised lumps or tags by the anus
- Itching
- Pain and discomfort with extensive warts

How are anal warts investigated?

When you are seen in clinic the consultant will take a full history and carry out a clinical examination. Usually this will involve a rigid sigmoidoscopy and sometimes a proctoscopy as well.

How are anal warts treated?

If warts are not treated they will usually grow larger and multiply. Very occasionally if left untreated anal cancer can develop.

For small warts that are few in number topical medications can be effective in treating them. Occasionally liquid nitrogen is used to freeze the warts.

When warts are larger, more extensive or are within the anus itself, surgical treatment is usually required.

The procedure to remove warts is usually carried out under a short anaesthetic. The warts are removed by a combination of cutting and electro-cautery.

The procedures are usually carried out as a day-case. Depending on the extent of the problem some patients feel only mild discomfort and are able to return to work soon after the procedure, whereas others may need longer off work.

For further advice about looking after the area after the surgery, patients can see our advice leaflet "*Caring for yourself after minor anal surgery*" which can be found in the Patient Information section of our website.

In some cases more than one surgical treatment may be necessary to ensure that the warts are completely eradicated.
Follow-up visits to the clinic are usually required for several months to ensure that warts have not re-grown.

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What are the next steps?

If you think you have this condition or any of these symptoms, you will need to seek medical advice.

If you have private medical care or wish to pay to see a consultant:

Take this factsheet along to your own GP and request a referral to one of our consultants.

For more information or to make an appointment:

Contact the Birmingham Bowel Clinic on 0845 241 7762 or email enquiries@birminghambowelclinic.co.uk.