

## **CENTER FOR UROLOGIC CARE**

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### **FACTS ON CONDYLOMA**

The number of people with condyloma, or genital warts as they are more commonly called, has increased dramatically over the past decade. The disease is more common than herpes, with over 1 million new cases of genital warts reported in the United States last year. An estimated 5% to 10% of women over 30 are infected with HPV at any given time. Condylomas are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV), however many more people are infected with the virus than have warts. HPV infections are sexually transmitted in most cases and pose a serious health risk to both the infected individual and his or her sexual partner. A complicating factor is the variable incubation period (time from contact to appearance of the wart) which may range from a few weeks to several months. In addition, HPV infections can disappear within two years in many individuals, yet in others it can linger for decades.

Human papilloma virus is a heterogeneous family of at least 100 distinct types of viruses which contain DNA, of which 25 are commonly found in the genital areas. HPV types 6 and 11 are most often associated with the development of genital warts in men. HPV types 16, 18, 31 and at least 10 others have been identified in 60% of women who develop cervical dysplasia and cancer. It is because of this cancer potential that sexual partners of women with abnormal PAP smears of their cervix are screened for genital warts. Thus, men whose sexual partners have either cervical condyloma or abnormal PAP smears must be evaluated for HPV infections. Conversely, female partners of men with genital warts should be evaluated by their gynecologists with a careful pelvic exam and the PAP smear.

Condyloma can either be seen with the naked eye or identified by soaking the genital area with 5% acetic acid (white vinegar) and then inspecting it with good light and magnification. Acetic acid causes subclinical condyloma to turn white. Condyloma can also be found in the opening of the urethra (tube that carries urine), and a urine sample should be evaluated for abnormal cells. At the present time, biopsy and HPV typing should be limited to selected cases.

Men with genital warts can be treated at home with frequent application of an acid preparation called Condylox, or in our office with a single Nd:Yag laser treatment. Following treatment, sexual contact should be avoided until the affected areas have healed, and Bacitracin or Neosporin ointment should be applied to the sites of laser destruction. A condom should be worn during intercourse to prevent reinfection, and a follow-up examination is recommended in 3 months. Cure rates range from 40-80% - recurrences may result from new lesions in adjacent areas (latent HPV) or because of incomplete destruction with the acid treatment.