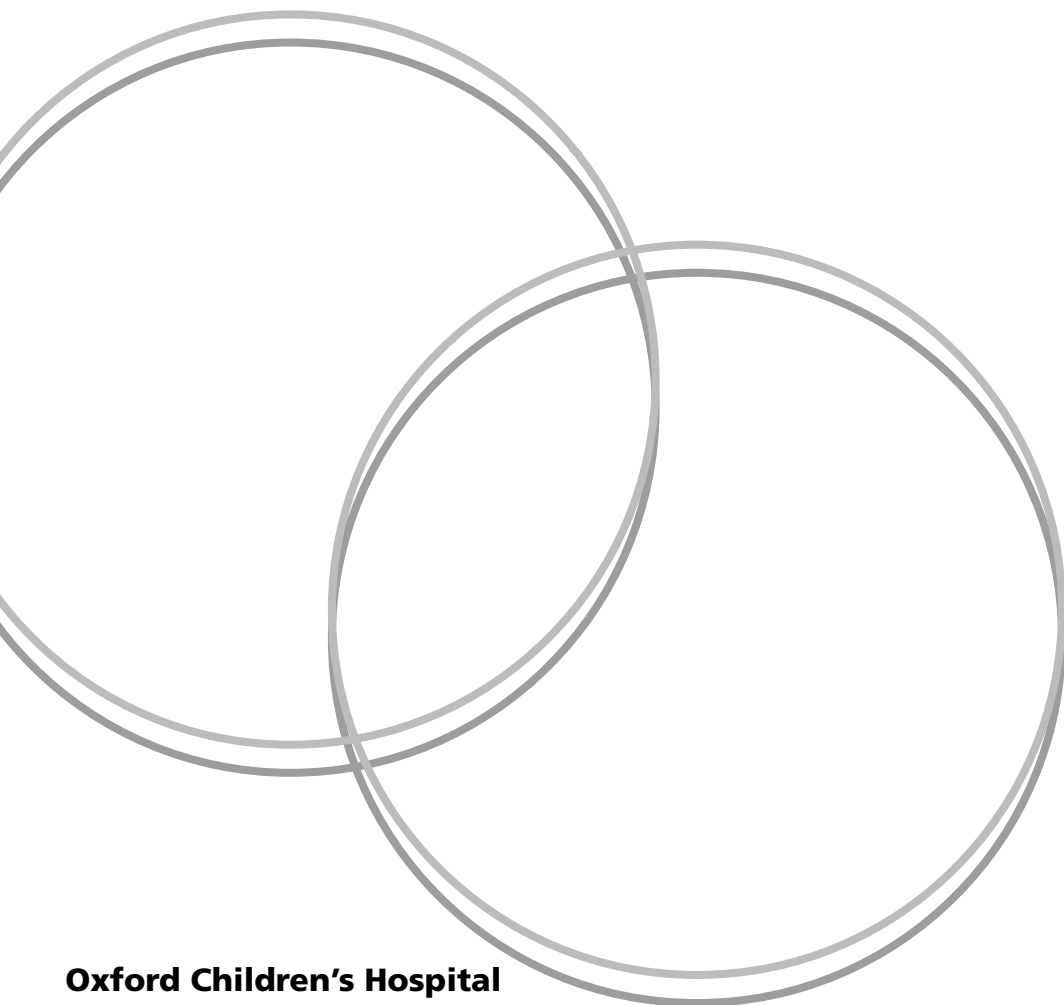


Anogenital Warts in Children

Information for patients,
parents and carers



What are anogenital warts?

Anogenital warts are small, flesh coloured growths that appear in the genital region or around the anus. They can join together to form plaques. They are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). Other infections (for example molluscum contagiosum) can cause similar looking lesions. Your doctor can normally tell what infection is the likely cause during the examination.

How do children get anogenital warts?

Anogenital warts can develop after infection with the HPV wart virus.

Anogenital warts in adults are usually passed on through sex or sexual contact.

In children there are also other ways in which the wart virus can be passed on.

It can take a long time (sometimes even years) between catching the virus and getting visible warts. The virus can be transmitted by sexual and/or nonsexual contact. Not everyone who carries the virus has warts that you can see. It can sometimes be very difficult to be sure about where the warts came from.

How can children catch the wart virus?

Vertical transmission:

This is when a baby catches the wart virus from their mother during pregnancy or delivery. Sometimes the mother does not know she carries the wart virus, for example if she does not have visible anogenital warts. If your baby catches the wart virus this way, it can take several months or even years until anogenital warts appear.

Non-sexual contact:

This is when the wart virus is passed on to a child during normal daily activities. For example, if a parent has a wart on their hand and passes the virus on during washing/nappy changing. Or if a child has finger warts which are passed on to the genital area.

Sexual contact:

Just like in adults, the wart virus can be passed on through sex or sexual contact. In children, this would make us worried about possible sexual abuse.

There are many ways a child can catch the wart virus, and it's often hard to know exactly when or where it happened. We understand that this can be stressful and difficult to think about. That's why, following national guidance, we talk to Children's Social Care about all cases of anogenital warts in prepubertal children. This helps ensure that any important information about your child can be shared if needed.

The doctor assessing may also want to discuss with other professionals involved in your child's care e.g. GP, Health Visitor.

Treatment

We do not currently have any treatments that are completely effective.

There are several options:

- Watch and wait – most cases of warts in healthy children will clear up on their own without any treatment within a few years.

If the warts are causing pain, bleeding or emotional distress then treatment will be considered. The dermatology doctors will give more advice about potential treatments.

- Oral zinc – may increase immune response around the lesions and help with disappearance. This is a safe and well tolerated treatment. For more information please see leaflet 'Oral Zinc for Warts'.
- Topical treatments can be considered in certain circumstances.
- Surgical and laser options – only if large and extensive lesions.

Follow-up

If it is possible that vertical transmission from mother has occurred we advise that you should speak to your GP and keep up to date with cervical smear tests.

Your child can continue normal involvement with their regular activities and sports.

If treatment is advised and commenced then the dermatology doctors will arrange follow-up in their outpatient clinic.

How to contact us

If you have any further questions, please contact your GP or:

Community Paediatric Secretaries

Tel: **01865 231 959**

Dermatology Secretary

Tel: **01865 228 224**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Departments of Community Paediatrics and Dermatology

August 2025

Review: August 2028

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



Making a difference across our hospitals

charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

