

National Survey Reveals Most Americans Unaware of One of the Most Common Sexually Transmitted Diseases; Widespread Lack of Knowledge About Genital Warts

More than 24 million Americans are infected with the human papillomavirus (HPV)(1), the virus that can cause one of the most common, yet least recognized, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) known as external genital warts (EGWs), according to United States health experts. In fact, nearly three out of four Americans will be infected with HPV in their lifetime.(2) According to a recent nationwide survey of adults ages 18-40, conducted by Harris Interactive, external genital warts remain unrecognized by 97 percent of respondents as one of the most common STDs.

"These results are a wake-up call for sexually active adults of any age. HPV and external genital warts are a significant public health problem in the United States because many are unaware of what genital warts are, how to prevent them or even what treatments are available," says Anita L. Nelson, M.D., professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, and medical director of Women's Health Care Programs at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Torrance, Calif. "Sadly, there is no cure for HPV, the virus that causes genital warts, so prevention and prompt treatment of genital warts are essential."

Genital warts can appear as small growths or bumps that may be raised or flat or appear in a cluster with a cauliflower-like appearance. Left untreated, genital warts can grow quite large. Although not all HPV infections will result in genital warts, as many as 1 million new cases of EGW are diagnosed in the United States each year. (3)

Unlike some other STDs, condoms are not always effective in preventing EGW because it can spread through direct skin-to-skin contact during vaginal, anal or oral sex with an infected partner. Unfortunately, many are still unaware of this. In fact, a majority (75 percent) of respondents believe that using condoms during sexual intercourse will prevent the transmission of EGW. In addition, myths about transmission continue to persist; nearly 60 percent of respondents thought it was possible to contract EGW through the use of public toilets.(4)

There is no cure for the virus that causes EGWs; however, treatment can eradicate external warts. Traditional treatments include surgical, laser or chemical techniques performed in the physician's office that can involve tissue destruction and are often associated with pain and sometimes even scarring.

About Patient-Applied Aldara (imiquimod) Cream, 5%

Aldara (imiquimod) Cream, 5% is the newest therapy in a class of drugs referred to as immune response modifiers (IRM). Available by prescription only, Aldara cream is the only patient-applied cream approved by the FDA for the treatment of external genital and perianal warts. Aldara cream works by inducing the local production of specific cytokines which activate the body's immune system to clear the genital warts while reducing the level of HPV in the body. Patient-applied Aldara cream provides patients with a treatment choice that eliminates the trauma sometimes associated with chemical and surgical removal of external genital warts.

"Surgical, destructive and chemical treatments are effective for treating external genital warts, but they require time for healing, are often painful and may require multiple visits to the clinician's office. Newer therapies, such as Aldara cream, boost the immune system and allow patients to apply the treatment in the privacy of their homes," says Dr. Nelson.

Most local skin reactions were mild to moderate and included erythema, erosion, flaking, edema, scabbing and induration at the wart site. Most common application-site reactions were itching (26%), burning (16 percent) and pain (4 percent) at the wart site. Application-site pigmentation changes also have been reported.

New warts may develop during treatment. The effect of Aldara cream on the transmission of genital warts is unknown. Aldara cream may weaken condoms and diaphragms. Sexual contact should be avoided while the cream is on the skin.

Aldara cream is being studied in several other disease areas, including basal cell carcinoma and actinic keratosis.

For more information about Aldara cream, genital warts or HPV, visit the 3M Pharmaceuticals Web site at www.3m.com/aldara.

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Press Release References:

1. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease.
2. American Social Health Association.
3. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.
4. STD Awareness Survey, Harris Interactive. An online survey of 1,000 adults 18-40 years of age.
5. Data on file (1233 Perception Survey), 3M Pharmaceuticals.

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