



VIRAL WARTS

Written for parents and young people (key stage 2 and above)

What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet has been written to help children and young people understand more about viral warts. It tells you what it is, what causes it, what can be done about it and where you can find out more about it. The information will also be helpful to parents.

What are warts?

Warts are very common growths on the skin caused by an infection with a virus called human papilloma virus (HPV). They do not usually cause any problems but can sometimes catch on things (such as clothing), which can be painful. They sometimes make people feel embarrassed because of how they look. Most people will have warts at some point in their life. They tend to affect children and teenagers more than adults.

Warts that occur on the sole of the foot are called verrucae or verrucas.

Why have I got warts?

The wart virus can be passed from person to person by close skin-to-skin contact. It can also be transmitted through shared use of contaminated objects or surfaces, such as the area surrounding a swimming pool. The virus is more likely to cause infection if the skin is wet or damaged. Not everyone who is in contact with the virus will develop warts. It is important to know that you do not get warts because you are dirty and they are nothing to be embarrassed about.

Warts may develop in people who are otherwise well. However, when the immune system, which works to fight infections, is not working well or somebody is taking medication to suppress the immune system (for example medicines used to treat cancer), warts can be more of a problem and harder to treat.

How can warts be treated?

Most warts will disappear without treatment over time. There are many different types of treatment options, but none are completely effective. For these reasons often not treating the warts and waiting for them to go on their own is the best thing to do. The main treatments which can be tried include applying something directly onto the wart (topical treatment), taking a tablet, or cryotherapy (freeze treatment).

Topical treatment for warts

Topical products containing up to 50% Salicylic Acid are recommended to treat warts or verrucae at home. Treatment with these products can make the wart smaller and less uncomfortable.

Application:

1. Firstly soften the wart by soaking in a bath or bowl of hot soapy water.
2. Protect surrounding normal skin and nails if necessary, with Vaseline, to avoid spreading the wart virus.
3. Pare the wart/verruca with an emery board or a pumice stone.
4. Apply the salicylic acid product with a cotton bud to the affected area.
5. Cover with a simple dressing or plaster overnight.
6. Remove in the morning.
7. This can be applied initially for 3 nights and then used every night if it is not causing any problems.
8. If the wart becomes too sore, stop treatment for a few days and then restart.

Cryotherapy

Cryotherapy involves freezing the wart with a very cold spray of liquid nitrogen (See information leaflet on cryotherapy). Sometimes one treatment can be enough to encourage the body's immune system to attack the virus, but it may require a number of treatments, depending on the response. This is not routinely available on the NHS.

Other treatments for warts

There have been some studies which have shown that supplements with certain vitamins and minerals can help clear warts. Although it is not clear how

helpful these treatments are it does seem sensible to make sure that your diet has enough essential vitamins and minerals and current advice is for all children and young people to take a multi vitamin tablet which contains zinc.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/others/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/vitamins-for-children/>

Where can I get further information:

Warts and Verrucas – NHS website

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/warts-and-verruccas/>

British Skin Foundation website

<https://www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk/plantar-warts-verruccas>

Patient information website

<https://patient.info/skin-conditions/warts-and-verruccas-leaflet>

<https://www.bad.org.uk/for-the-public/patient-information-leaflets/plantar-warts>

For details of source materials used please contact the Clinical Standards Unit (clinicalstandards@bad.org.uk).

This leaflet aims to provide accurate information about the subject and is a consensus of the views held by representatives of the British Society for Paediatric Dermatology which is a part of the British Association of Dermatologists. Individual patient circumstances may differ, which may alter both the advice and treatment given by your doctor

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