

WARTS

YOU HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH WARTS (VERRUCA VULGARIS)



WHAT IS IT?

Warts are common viral infections caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). There are many different strains of this virus, causing various types of warts, and specific tests are usually not necessary.

COMMON "AT-HOME" WART TREATMENTS

OVER-THE-COUNTER WART TREATMENT

Salicylic acid liquid, pads or tape (e.g., Dr. Scholl's, Compound W, Duofilm, Mediplast):

- Soak the warts in warm water for 5 minutes every night.
- Gently file the surface of thick warts with a nail file or pumice stone used only for this purpose. Remember, warts are a virus that can be spread!
- Apply the wart medicine directly to the warts, avoiding the normal skin (applying petroleum jelly to surrounding skin can help protect it).
- Cover the wart medicine/pad/tape with duct tape. If using liquid salicylic acid, make sure it dries completely before applying the duct tape.
- Leave the tape in place at least overnight or, if possible, for 24 hours.
- Repeat these steps nightly until the wart is gone (which can take 2-4 months).
- Expect the skin of the wart to appear moist and white during treatment. If the skin becomes too irritated, then take a treatment break.
- Do not use this medicine on the face or groin area unless instructed to do so by your physician.

PRESCRIPTION TREATMENTS

- **Retinoids** (adapalene, tretinoin, tazarotene), 5-fluorouracil (Efudex) or imiquimod (Aldara) creams are sometimes used to treat flat warts or warts on the face and other sensitive areas. They are usually applied directly to the warts once a day for 2-4 months and can be irritating.
- "**Compounded**" wart formulations containing agents such as salicylic acid, cantharidin, 5-fluorouracil and other agents may be used to treat warts. These products can be irritating and should not be used on the face or groin area. They should be used as directed by your health care provider.
- **Systemic treatment** with oral cimetidine (Tagamet) may help boost the immune system against the wart virus. Initiation of cimetidine therapy should only be done under the supervision of your health care provider, who can discuss possible side effects and drug-to-drug interactions of this specific treatment.

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COMMON "IN-OFFICE" WART TREATMENTS

CRYOTHERAPY

- This is a cold spray (usually liquid nitrogen) used to freeze the wart.
- It may cause a blister.

CANDIDA ("YEAST") ANTIGEN INJECTIONS

- These are extracts of the common yeast (Candida) that cannot cause an infection. The medication is injected into/under the wart. It is thought to stimulate the immune system to recognize the wart virus and attack it.
- Multiple injections are needed about one month apart.

LASER

- A laser is used to reduce the blood supply to the wart.

PARING

- Scraping or filing down a wart can help make other wart treatments more effective.

TYPES OF WARTS

There are five major types of warts. Each type appears on a different part of your body and has a distinct appearance.

Common warts are grayish and usually grow on your fingers and toes. They are rough, grainy, and have a rounded top.

Flat warts have a flat top and can be pink, brownish, or slightly yellow. They typically grow on your face, thighs, or arms. Because they are small, they are not always immediately noticed.

Periungual warts grow around and under your fingernails and toenails. They can affect nail growth and are usually painful.

Plantar warts grow into your skin on the soles of the feet. If it looks like you have a small hole in the bottom of your foot that is surrounded by hardened skin, then you likely have a plantar wart. Plantar warts can make walking painful.

Filiform warts are shaped like tiny flaps skin. They appear around your mouth or nose and sometimes under your chin or on your neck. Filiform warts are the same color as your skin.

WART FACTS

1. Warts are the second most common dermatological complaint.
2. Three out of four people will develop a wart (*verruca vulgaris*) at some time in their lives.
3. Warts are much more common in children than adults.
4. Warts can go away without treatment as our own immune system learns how to fight them. About 60% of warts will disappear within about 2 years.
5. There are many possible ways to treat warts and, sometimes several different treatments are needed to get the warts to go away completely.
6. There is no single perfect treatment for warts, and successful treatment can take many months. Your health care professional will help you find the right treatment tailored to your individual needs.
7. For in-office treatments, multiple visits are usually required.