

WARTS

(Verruca Vulgaris)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Skin growths caused by a virus in the outer skin layer. Warts are not cancerous. They are mildly contagious from person to person and from one area to another on the same person. They can appear anywhere on the skin, but most likely on the fingers, hands, and arms. They are most common in children and young adults between ages 1 and 30, but may occur at any age. Note: this information does not discuss genital warts.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

A small, raised bump on the skin with the following features:

- Warts begin very small and grow larger.
- Warts have a rough surface and clearly defined borders. They are usually the same color as the skin, but sometimes darker.
- Warts often appear in clusters around a "mother wart."
- If you cut into the wart surface, it contains small black dots or bleeding points.
- Warts are painless and typically don't itch.
- Plantar warts appear on the soles of the feet.

CAUSES

Infection of the outer skin layer (epidermis) by the human papillomavirus (HPV) family. The virus causes some cells to grow more rapidly than normal. Warts are very common.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Use of public showers.
- Skin injury.
- People who have a weak immune system due to drugs or illness.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- To keep from spreading warts, don't scratch them. Warts spread readily to small cuts and scratches.
- Wear thong sandals in public locker rooms, swimming pools, or showers. Don't share towels.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

There is no one specific treatment for warts that works for everybody. Some warts go away on their own, others are cured with nonprescription drugs. Some may require medical care that could include surgery. There are also many "home remedies" that may work for some people. Nonsurgical treatment for warts may take some time, so be patient.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Spread to other places in the body.
- Scars where warts were removed.
- Recurrence of warts after treatment.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- There are a variety of nonprescription products and home (or folk) remedies for warts. Family members or friends may recommend trying different treatments.
- Your health care provider has other options for treatment. These can be done during an office visit. Some treatments may be somewhat painful, so be sure to discuss the risks and benefits.
 - Cryotherapy (freezing) with liquid nitrogen. Freezing causes a blister to form that heals in about a week. More than one treatment may be needed for complete wart removal.
 - Electrosurgery (using heat). This treatment is often completed in one office visit. An electric needle is used to cut away the wart or destroy it.
 - Surgery with a knife (scalpel) or laser.
 - Injection of a drug into the wart.

MEDICATIONS

- There are nonprescription drugs for treatment of warts. Most are applied to skin daily for several weeks. Also available is a freezing aerosol product. Follow the instructions provided with any product that you buy.
- Your health care provider may prescribe stronger drugs or injections for removing the warts.

ACTIVITY

No limits.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or your child has warts on the face or genital area.
- Self-treatment for warts has not worked.
- After treatment, the treated skin becomes hot, red, and painful.
- Warts don't disappear completely after treatment.
- Other warts appear after treatment.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page