Wart Treatment

What are warts?

Warts are infections caused by viruses of the human papillomavirus family getting in your skin. Children and teenagers are more susceptible to warts than adults.

Warts are spread by contact—from person to person contact or from one location to another on the same person. The wart virus usually enters where there has been some breach in the integrity of the skin such as a cut or scratch. Covering warts with a bandage may reduce the chance of spreading them to another site or person.

Spotting a wart

Warts are evidenced by tiny, hard bumps on the skin that may have a rough surface that resembles a cauliflower or they may be smooth and flat. Warts vary in color (white, pink, or brown), and may contain tiny spots that look like black hair or specks. They can occur on any area of the body; but they are most common on the fingers, hands, arms, and feet. Although warts are usually painless, plantar warts (warts on the soles of the feet) may cause discomfort that feels like walking on a small stone. Plantar warts are often flat and level with the surface of the skin, instead of appearing as little bumps.

How long do warts last?

Warts may disappear spontaneously in a few months, or they may last for years or even an entire lifetime. Because warts are caused by a virus, it is impossible to predict how many treatments will be needed to remove them. Warts usually require multiple treatments over a two to three month period.

Wart types

**Common warts:** Common warts begin as small, smooth, fleshy-colored masses and evolve into dome-shaped, gray-brown, rough growths with black dots on the surface (old clotted blood vessels).

**Filiform warts:** Filiform warts are finger like, flesh-colored projections most commonly observed around the mouth, eyes, and nose.

**Flat warts:** Flat warts (verruca plana) are slightly elevated, flat-topped, pink, light brown, or light yellow. Generally they are numerous, found around the forehead, mouth and the backs of hands.

**Plantar warts:** Planter warts are found on the soles of the feet. They are flat or slightly raised, and may have multiple visible dark specks within them. They are painful if they lie over a pressure point on the foot.

Wart treatment

Professional treatments by doctors include:

- Freezing warts with liquid nitrogen
- Burning off the wart with electricity, electrocautery, after giving local anesthetic
- Numbing the skin and then scraping the wart off
- Laser surgery
- Over-the-counter treatments to coincide with lotions, ointments or plasters work to chemically remove the skin affected by the wart virus. These are usually strong chemicals and should be used with care. They must be used daily.

*Treatments may last for months.*