



## Warts

Warts are a very common virus infection, found most often in children, but affecting all ages. These growths are not dangerous, but they can be ugly and, at times, uncomfortable.

The wart virus causes a skin growth when the virus enters the skin through a small crack or break. Fingers (common warts) and soles of the feet (plantar warts) are common locations. However, warts that occur in the genital area is a sexually transmitted disease.

Generally, warts occurring in children before puberty clear on their own without treatment. In adults, warts are more likely to remain, neither growing nor regressing. Individuals with poor immune systems, either by medications such as cortisones, some illnesses, or old age, may experience increasing numbers or sizes of warts.

Unfortunately, we have no medications that kill a wart virus. Therefore, most of our treatments are directed towards destruction of the wart bump. This not only shrinks the size of the wart growth, but also it attracts the attention of the body's immune system, that part of our body that fights off infection naturally.

Common treatments for warts are:

### **Plantar warts:**

These are often treated with home therapy, since this type of therapy produces the least pain, allowing the individual to continue with an active lifestyle. An over-the-counter salicylic acid plaster for plantar warts is cut to exactly cover the wart. It is then affixed with adhesive tape. Every 2-3 days, the plaster is removed, any dead, white wart is removed with an emery board, and replaced with a new plaster, until the wart has cleared.

These can also be treated by freezing, but this produces a blister or sore. After healing, and sloughing of the blister roof, this is repeated, until the wart has cleared.

Other therapies include the application of cantharidin/salicylic acid in the office, the injection of bleomycin, and laser therapy, as well as many more unresearched therapies such as duct tape.

### **Common warts:**

These are often treated in the office by freezing, which produces a blister. After 1-2 weeks, the blister and much or all of the wart peels off. Unless clear, the area should be retreated immediately after healing, and sometimes multiple treatments are required.

Home therapy, when performed regularly and correctly, is highly effective for most people. The wart is soaked in warm tap water until it is white, and crumbly. The surface of the wart is removed with an emery board, and then over-the-counter liquid salicylic acid for warts is applied. The next night, the warts are again soaked, the old medication and dead surface wart are removed with an emery board, and salicylic acid is again applied. This is repeated nightly until the warts are clear. This generally requires 1-2 months.

Cantharidin and laser therapy are also possible therapies.

One particular therapy has not proven itself more effective than the others.