

Warts: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

A wart is a harmless skin growth caused by a virus. The virus makes the top layer of skin grow quickly, causing a wart. Warts usually go away on their own in months or years. There are several types of warts. Common warts appear most often on the hands, but they may be anywhere on the body. Plantar warts occur on the soles of the feet and may cause pain when you walk.

Warts spread easily. You can reinfect yourself by touching the wart and then touching another part of your body. You can infect others by sharing towels, razors, or other personal items.

Most warts do not need treatment and go away on their own. But if warts cause pain or spread, your doctor may recommend that you use an over-the-counter treatment. These include salicylic acid or duct tape. Or your doctor may prescribe a stronger medicine to put on warts or may inject them with medicine. The doctor also can remove warts through surgery or by freezing them.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

For common warts

- Use salicylic acid or duct tape as your doctor directs. You put the medicine or the tape on a wart for several days and then file down the dead skin on the wart. You use the salicylic acid treatment for 2 to 3 months or the tape for 1 to 2 months.
- If your doctor prescribes medicine to put on warts, use it exactly as directed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.

For plantar (foot) warts

- Wear comfortable shoes and socks. Avoid high heels and shoes that put a lot of pressure on your foot.
- Pad the wart with doughnut-shaped felt or a moleskin patch. You can buy these at a drugstore. Put the pad around the plantar wart so that it relieves pressure on the wart. You also can place pads or cushions in your shoes to make walking more comfortable.
- Take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.

To avoid spreading warts

- Keep warts covered with a bandage or athletic tape.
- Do not bite your nails or cuticles. This may spread warts from one finger to another.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs of infection, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
 - Red streaks leading from a wart.
 - Pus draining from a wart.
 - A fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.

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