

Warts

What are warts?

Warts are benign infectious growths caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV).

Types of warts and verrucas

- **Common wart:** These are firm, round raised growths with a rough surface. They are usually found in children and youths. They appear most commonly on your fingers, the back of your hands and around your nails, but also on your knees and elbows.
- **Flat wart:** Small and soft, with a smooth, flat top. They can appear in groups. They are most common on your face.
- **Verruca:** Verrucas are warts on the soles of your feet. They are painful and have tiny black dots.
- **Filiform warts:** These are small, long projections. They usually appear around your mouth, nose and eyes.
- **Anogenital warts.**

How are they diagnosed?

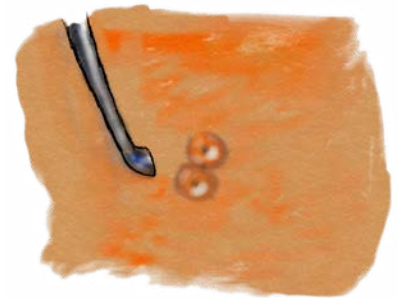
Your doctor will usually be able to tell if you have a wart by looking at the growth and examining it.

What kinds of treatments are available?

- Most warts go away on their own after a few months or years (60-70% disappear within 3 months), but they are less likely to disappear in elderly people or when you have had the growth for a long time.
- There are topical treatments which contain salicylic acid, with a weaker concentration for hands (16%) and a stronger concentration for feet (40%). There are also treatments with

other acids, including formic acid (0.025%), retinoic acid (0.05%) and tretinoin (0.1%).

- **Cryotherapy.** This is the process of freezing your wart using liquid nitrogen so that it falls off.



- **Curettage:** In this process your wart is scraped away with a special instrument.

- **Surgery.**

Whichever treatment is used, warts and verrucas can take months to disappear and may reappear.

How to prevent spreading warts and verrucas and to help cure them.

- If you have warts on your fingers don't bite your nails or suck your fingers as this can spread them.
- Avoid direct contact with the growth or with towels and toys etc. that have been in contact with it.
- If you have a verruca don't go barefoot at swimming pools, in communal showers or changing rooms, and keep your feet dry.
- It's better to stop smoking: tobacco makes it more difficult to get rid of warts and encourages the infection to come back.
- Don't shave the wart area.

