

Warts

Definition

Warts are small, raised growths that have a rough surface. They are caused by a virus and occur in children very commonly. Though they are harmless, they can be bothersome. Care for warts is reviewed below.

Symptoms

- Raised, round, rough-surfaced growths on the skin that are skin-colored or pink
- Typically occur on the hands, especially the fingers, though they can occur on feet. When on the sole of foot, they are called plantar warts. These can be painful.

How did my child get warts and how do I keep them from spreading?

Warts are very common in children and are caused by a virus. They can appear when your child touches the virus either on another person's skin or touches an object that has the virus on it (such as bare feet contacting pools, locker rooms, or gyms). Despite the old wives' tales, they are not caused by touching frogs or other reptiles or amphibians.

Tips to prevent spreading include:

- Avoid baths or hot tubs with others because they can spread in warm water.
- Avoid sharing washcloths or towels.
- Cover the wart with a band aid if the wart is in a place where it's likely to come in contact with another person when playing sports or other activities.
- Encourage your child not to pick at the wart. Picking it and scratching a new area with the same finger can spread warts. A new wart can form in 1 to 2 months. Additionally, putting fingers in the mouth could spread a wart from a finger to the face.
- Keep your child's fingernails cut short and wash hands more often.



Treatment and to expect

Treatment depends on the type of wart. For most warts (aside from those on the bottom of foot or in a more sensitive area, like the face or groin), you can treat at home. **It's also okay to do nothing; if the wart is not bothersome you can leave it alone.** In 2/3 of kids, warts will go away all by themselves within 2 years. If you'd like to treat the wart, options are explained further below. It often takes 2-3 months using home treatment to get rid of a wart.

1. Wart-Removing Acid:

- Buy a wart medicine with 17% salicylic acid. There are many brands at your local pharmacy over the counter (Compound W, Duofilm, Wart-Off, Wart Stick).
- Apply the acid once a day only to the top of the wart and **avoid getting any near the eyes or mouth or normal skin.**
- The acid will turn the wart white and deaden the skin .



2. Duct Tape - Cover the Wart:

- The acid will work faster if it is covered with duct tape. Do not use regular tape.
- If you don't want to use an acid, you can use duct tape alone.
- Covering warts with duct tape irritates the warts and this alerts the body to the wart, allowing the body's immune system to start fighting it.
- The covered warts should become red and start to die. After this often ALL the warts will go away.
- Remove the tape once per day, usually before bathing. Then replace it after bathing. If your child does not want to wear tape at school, apply the tape every night.

3. Remove Dead Wart:

- Once or twice a week, after bathing or soaking the wart, remove the dead skin material. This can be done as tolerated by using a disposable razor, an Emory board, (nail file), a pumice stone, or by scrubbing with a washcloth.

4. **Appointment with dermatologist:** If the wart is bothersome, we can refer you to a dermatologist. The primary types of warts that truly need a dermatologist are plantar (bottom of foot) warts. These usually do not resolve with home treatment and require the dermatologist to use liquid nitrogen or a laser to destroy the wart.

Return to school

Your child doesn't have to miss any childcare or school for warts. There is only a mild risk that warts spread to others.

Call If...

- Warts develop on the feet, genitals, or face (these should be managed by a dermatologist)
- New warts develop after 2 weeks of treatment
- Warts that are treated at home are still present after 12 weeks of treatment
- You think your child needs to be seen