

## Warts and Verrucas

Warts are usually harmless but may be unsightly. Warts on the feet are called verrucas (or verrucae) and are sometimes painful. Warts and verrucas usually clear in time without treatment. If required, they can often be cleared more quickly with treatment. Most commonly, treatment involves applying salicylic acid or freezing with liquid nitrogen or a cold spray.

### What are warts and verrucas?

- **Warts** are small rough lumps on the skin. They are caused by a virus (human papillomavirus) which causes a reaction in the skin. Warts can occur anywhere on the body but occur most commonly on hands and feet. They range in size from 1 mm to over 1 cm. Sometimes only one or two warts develop. Sometimes several occur in the same area of skin. The shape and size of warts vary and they are sometimes classed by how they look. Examples are:
  - Common warts.
  - Plane (flat) warts.
  - Filiform (finger-like) warts.
  - Mosaic warts - when several warts join together.
- **Verrucas** are warts on the soles of the feet. They are the same as warts on any other part of the body. However, they may look flatter, as they tend to get trodden in.

Note: anal and genital warts are different. [See separate leaflet called Anogenital Warts for more detail.](#)

### Who gets warts and verrucas and are they harmful?

Most people develop one or more warts at some time in their lives, usually before the age of 20. About 1 in 10 people in the UK have warts at any one time. Almost as many as 1 in 3 children or young people may have warts. They are not usually harmful. Sometimes verrucas are painful if they press on a sensitive part of the foot. Some people find their warts unsightly. Warts at the end of fingers may interfere with fine tasks.

### To treat or not to treat?

**There is no need to treat warts if they are not causing you any problems.** Half the number of children with warts will find they have disappeared within a year without any treatment. Two thirds will have gone within two years. The chance that a wart will go quickly is greatest in children and young people. Sometimes warts last longer, particularly in adults. In some cases warts may take between 5 and 10 years to clear. Treatment can often clear warts more quickly. However, treatments are time-consuming and some can be painful. Parents often want treatment for their children; however, children are often not bothered by warts. In most cases, simply waiting for them to go is usually the best thing to do.

**You can get advice about your wart or verruca from a pharmacy.**

**Patient Info** <https://patient.info/health/warts-and-verrucas-leaflet>

**NHS Choices** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/warts-and-verrucas/>