

Warts

Warts are an infection caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) family. Warts can grow on all parts of your body. Some types of HPV tend to cause warts on the skin, while other HPV types tend to cause warts on the genitals and rectal area. Some people are more naturally resistant to the HPV viruses and don't seem to get warts as easily as other people. Wart viruses can be spread by contact with a wart. It is also possible to get warts from using towels, doorknobs or other objects that were used by a person who has warts.

Do warts need to be treated?

Generally, yes. Often warts disappear on their own, although it may take many months, or even years, for the warts to go away. Some warts won't go away on their own. They are often bothersome. They can bleed and cause pain when they're bumped. They also can cause embarrassment. Treatment may also decrease the chance that the warts will be spread to other areas of your body or to other people.

How are warts on the skin removed?

First of all, it's important to know that warts on the skin, such as on the fingers, feet and knees, and warts on the genitals are removed in different ways. Don't try any home remedies or over-the-counter drugs to remove warts on the genital area. You also shouldn't treat warts on your face without talking to your doctor first. Below are some ways to remove warts from the skin:

- **Applying salicylic acid**--For warts on places such as the hands, feet or knees, one treatment method is to put salicylic acid on the warts. To get good results, you must apply the acid every day for many weeks. After you take a bath or shower, pat your skin dry lightly with a towel. Then put salicylic acid on your warts. The acid sinks in deeper and works better when it is applied to damp skin. Before you take a shower or a bath the next day, use an emery board or pumice stone to file away the dead surface of the warts.
- **Applying cantharidin**--Your doctor may use cantharidin on your warts. The chemical is "painted" onto the wart. Most people don't feel any pain when the chemical is applied to the wart. After treatment with cantharidin, a bandage is put over the wart. The bandage can be removed after 24 hours. You'll experience some pain and blistering of the wart in about 3 to 8 hours. If the blister ruptures, keep the wound clean and apply antibiotic ointment daily until the skin is healed. If the wart isn't gone after one treatment, apply salicylic acid tape (Mediplast) daily. If it isn't completely gone in four weeks, return to the doctor for another treatment.
- **Applying liquid nitrogen**--Your doctor or his assistant may use liquid nitrogen to freeze the wart. Applying liquid nitrogen to the wart causes a little discomfort. To completely remove a wart, liquid nitrogen treatments may be needed every 3 to 4 weeks for a total of 2 to 4 times. Treat any blisters as recommended above.
- **Other treatments for warts on the skin**—Doctors can also remove stubborn warts by burning the wart, cutting out the wart and removing the wart with a laser. These treatments are stronger, but they may leave a scar. Ask your doctor about the risks and benefits of these treatments before you decide what kind of treatment to have for your warts.

Do warts ever come back?

Most of the time, treatment of warts is successful and the warts are gone for good. Your body's natural immunity can usually get rid of any tiny bits of wart that may be left after a wart has been treated. If warts come back, usually it is because they were too small to be seen at the first treatment. See your doctor to talk about other ways in which they can be treated.