

WARTS AND VERRUCAS

Warts and verrucas are caused by human papilloma virus infection. Warts are small, usually round, lumps of thickened skin about 1 mm to 1 cm across. They most often appear on your hands and feet but can develop anywhere on your body. Most have a bumpy surface and feel rough, but some are smooth. You may get 1 or 2 warts, or several warts may develop at the same time in the same place.



Verrucas are warts that develop on the soles of your feet. They are white, often with a black dot in their centre. Because they are on the parts of your feet that you tread on, verrucas tend to be flatter than other warts. They can be also be painful.

You can get a verruca if you tread on flakes of infected skin on the floors of public places such as swimming pools. You are more likely to get a verruca if your skin is damaged or softened after getting wet.

How can I treat my wart or verruca?

Warts and verrucas usually go away on their own in 2 to 3 years without causing any other problems. Treating your wart or verruca may get rid of it sooner, but it will probably still take many weeks for it to go.

If you decide to treat your wart or verruca, be aware that the treatment can irritate your skin. If the skin around your wart or verruca becomes sore or red and itchy, stop treating it for a few days.

Use salicylic acid paint, gel or ointment to treat warts or verrucas. Ask your pharmacist whether salicylic acid treatment is suitable for you.

Don't put salicylic acid on:

- your face, on your bottom, your genital area or in areas where skin touches skin, for example, under your arms or breasts.
- moles or birthmarks, on warts with hair growing out of them, on wounds or skin that doesn't heal well, or on red or sore skin.
- areas with a lot of warts or verrucas.

Treatments containing salicylic acid are flammable. Keep them away from flames, sparks and hot surfaces.

Salicylic acid comes in different strengths and forms, for example as a paint, gel or ointment.

To use **Salactol collodion (16.7%) paint** and **Salatac (12%) gel**:

- Rub away the skin on top of your wart or verruca using an emery board, or soak it in warm water for 5 to 10 minutes to soften the skin. Or, you can do both.
- Put the paint or gel on your wart or verruca once a day at bedtime until the wart or verruca disappears. Squeeze the gel straight out of the tube. Use the applicator that comes with the paint.
- Don't get the paint or gel on healthy skin around your wart or verruca – protect your surrounding healthy skin using Vaseline or plasters.
- Before you put the paint or gel on, peel off the film left from the last time you put it on (if it's still there). Then use the emery board and/or soak your wart or verruca as you did the first time.
- Don't put the paint or gel on your face or on areas of skin with a lot of warts or verrucas – this may scar or irritate your skin.
- Don't use Salactol collodion paint or Salatac gel in children under 2 years old.
- Don't use Salactol collodion paint if you are allergic to plasters.

If you have tried Salactol collodion paint (16.7%) or Salatac gel (12%) gel on a **verruca**, but they didn't work, you could try Verrugon.

Verrugon ointment contains higher-strength salicylic acid (50%).

- Take the backing off the self-adhesive ring that comes with the ointment and put it over your verruca so that you see the verruca when you look into the hole.
- Squeeze the ointment into the hole on to the verruca.
- Cover the ring with a plaster.
- Before putting on the ointment the next day, rub off the dead skin on top of your verruca using a pumice stone or file.
- Don't use Verrugon if you're allergic to wool fat or plasters.

What else can help?

Stop warts and verrucas spreading to other areas of your skin:

- don't pick or scratch your wart or verruca
- don't bite or suck fingers that have warts
- change your socks or tights every day if you have a verruca.

Do I need to see my doctor?

See your doctor if:

- you have a wart on your face, on your bottom, or in areas where skin touches skin, such as under your arms or breasts
- if you are not sure whether your lump is a wart or a verruca
- you have a lot of warts or verrucas, or get them often
- you have a weakened immune system from cancer therapy, steroid therapy or other medicines or conditions
- you have diabetes or poor circulation
- you've used salicylic acid for 12 weeks (see treatment section), and it's not working on your wart or verruca
- your wart or verruca is bleeding, has hair growing out of it, or looks different to the way it looked before
- your wart or verruca hurts a lot or is making you very upset.

Can I give warts or verrucas to other people?

Yes, the virus causing warts and verrucas can be passed on to other people if they have close contact with your wart or verruca, but warts and verrucas don't spread easily. There is no need for you to avoid swimming or other sports. You are less likely to pass on warts or verrucas to other people if you:

- cover your wart or verruca with a waterproof plaster when you go swimming
- wear flip-flops in public showers
- don't share shoes, socks and towels.

Where can I find further information?

British Association of Dermatologists: www.bad.org.uk/for-the-public

NHS Direct Wales: www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

NHS Direct Wales Tel: 0845 4647 (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Calls from landlines and mobiles cost 2p per minute, in addition to telephone providers access charge.