

Warts (HPV)

(Common viral skin growths caused by HPV)

What Are Warts?

Warts are benign skin growths caused by certain types of **human papillomavirus (HPV)**. They can appear anywhere on the skin but are most common on the hands, fingers, feet, knees, and areas of minor skin trauma.

Warts are **not cancer**, but they can spread to other areas of your skin or to other people through contact.



Types of Warts

- **Common warts:** rough bumps on fingers, hands, or knees
- **Plantar warts:** warts on the soles of the feet; may feel like walking on a pebble
- **Flat warts:** small, smoother bumps often on the face, arms, or legs
- **Periungual warts:** around fingernails or toenails

How Are Warts Treated?

Treatment depends on wart type, size, number, location, and patient age.

Common options include:

- **Cryotherapy** with liquid nitrogen
- Prescription topical treatments
- Cantharidin or other in-office treatments, if available
- Shave removal or curettage in selected cases
- Combination therapy for stubborn warts

Warts often need **multiple treatments** spaced several weeks apart.

Pre-Op Instructions

Before wart treatment

- Do not pick, cut, or shave over the wart.
- Tell us if you have diabetes, poor circulation, immune suppression, or nerve problems in the feet.
- Tell us if you are pregnant or have medication allergies.
- For plantar warts, wear comfortable shoes after treatment.
- Avoid applying thick ointments right before the visit unless instructed.

Post-Op Instructions

After cryotherapy or in-office treatment

What's normal

- Redness, swelling, tenderness
- Blistering, including blood blisters
- Crusting or scabbing
- Temporary soreness when walking if treated on the foot

Aftercare

- Keep the area clean.
- Do not pop blisters.
- Cover with a bandage if irritated or rubbing.
- Use petroleum jelly if crusting develops.
- Avoid picking or scratching.

Call the office if you develop spreading redness, pus, fever, severe pain, or worsening swelling.

Warts FAQ

Are warts contagious?

Yes. Warts can spread through direct contact or shared surfaces, especially when skin is broken or wet.

Are warts caused by poor hygiene?

No. Anyone can get warts.

Do warts go away on their own?

Sometimes, especially in children, but it can take months to years.

Why do warts need repeated treatments?

The virus lives in skin cells, and repeated treatment helps gradually destroy infected tissue and stimulate the immune response.

Can I use over-the-counter wart medicine?

Sometimes, especially for simple hand or foot warts. Avoid OTC acids on the face, genitals, or if you have diabetes or poor circulation.

Are plantar warts the same as corns?

No. Plantar warts are viral; corns are pressure-related thickened skin.

Will wart treatment leave a scar?

Scarring is uncommon but possible, especially with aggressive treatment or picking.