

How to get rid of warts and verrucas

A guide for patients

Warts are caused by the human wart virus.

Warts on the feet are called verrucas.

They usually clear without treatment, but can take several years. In some adults they can stay for longer.

Treatment is considered if they are painful or causing distress.

No treatment is 100% effective and most chemical treatments need daily application for around 3 to 6 months.

Surgery is avoided as warts will often come back. Chemical treatments are more effective and most are available from the chemist.

Freezing or Cryotherapy (liquid Nitrogen) by the GP or hospital clinic is painful and can destroy normal tissue as well, causing blistering and scarring. Many treatment sessions may be necessary and it is not always available in every surgery, or, necessarily on the NHS.

If you are patient, and prepared to attend to it daily, you can clear your wart yourself, but remember, it may take 3-6 months.

Practical tip : Remove the hard skin that is covering the wart (particularly important with a verruca), by paring with a pumice stone or emery board. Do this often ie. several times a week after soaking/ washing. Treatments will not work if the hard skin is not removed first.

Treatment Options (can all be bought over the counter) :

1. Salicylic Acid (first choice)

Occlusal wart paint (26% Salicylate) - applied daily to the wart , dries as a white cap, no need to cover. Simply renew after soak/ rubbing away dead skin.

Salactol (16.7%) or Salatac gel (12%) are weaker versions. Avoid if allergic to Elastoplast.

Verrugon ointment (40% salicylate) is the strongest acid. Normal skin must be protected by covering with duct tape or placing a corn plaster around the wart and filling the central hole with ointment.

Medicated Corn Plasters already containing 40% salicylate are very useful, particularly for verrucas and can be applied daily, or left on for a few days at a time.

Don't be afraid to get to work with the pumice stone and remove the dead skin.

2. Formaldehyde

Veracur gel (formaldehyde 0.75%) is particularly good for verrucas. Apply daily.

3. Glutaraldehyde

Glutarol solution(glutaraldehyde 10%) is also good for verrucas. Apply twice daily. Protect surrounding skin with a corn plaster (can stain skin brown).

4. Cold Spray

Wartner or Acti- freeze (dimethyl- ether/ propane) aerosol spray canister with applicator. Not the same as liquid nitrogen/ cryotherapy and much weaker (but safer to use and not so painful).

Available over the counter, not on prescription, this is a useful addition to the chemical treatments when used once or twice a week.

5. Duct Tape

Cut a piece of Duct Tape (from hardware stores) and apply to the wart (over a dab of chemical ie. Veracur)and leave in place for 6 days. Renew if comes off. Remove tape, soak and then use pumice/ emery to get rid of dead skin. Leave uncovered overnight and re- apply a new piece of tape next morning, leave for 6 days etc. Continue for 2 months.

If wart becomes sore or inflamed, leave treatments off until settled. See GP if not settling ie. you think it might be infected (increasing redness and pain).

Warts that are “on the way out” will often look a little inflamed as the immune system is recruited to join in the attack.

For swimming whilst you have a verruca, cover with a waterproof plaster (Compeed blister plasters are very good) or wear special rubber socks.

Wearing appropriate footwear in pools and changing rooms cuts down transmission of the wart virus as it thrives in wet places.

For further information on treating warts and verrucas :

[www.patient.co.uk warts](http://www.patient.co.uk/warts)

www.nhs.uk/conditions/warts