

Verrucae

Information for patients



Podiatry Department

What are verrucae?

Verrucae are harmless warts that appear on the skin of your feet. They vary in size from a few millimetres to more than one centimetre. They can develop as a single lesion, or they can be widespread or in clusters.

What causes verrucae?

Verrucae are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV) which can be spread with direct skin contact. You are at higher risk of catching them if you walk barefoot in shared changing rooms, swimming pools and showers.

Signs and symptoms

- Verrucae can have an uneven, rough surface which is often described as cauliflower-like
- They can appear white, yellow or skin-like colour
- Black dots may be visible at the centre (blood vessels)
- There may be a layer of hard skin on top of the verruca

In most cases verrucae are not painful and do not need to be treated. However, some can cause discomfort if they are located on the weight-bearing area of your foot or when there is a build-up of hard skin over the verruca.

Treatments available

There is no definitive treatment. They can persist for months and years without causing any problems and often disappear on their own. Filing any overlying hard skin with a single-use emery board can help reduce discomfort and can sometimes stimulate the immune system to fight the infection itself.

There are treatments that you can carry out at home if you wish. These treatments should be carried out as directed on the instructions but stop if the verruca disappears. If it becomes unusually painful or the surrounding skin becomes red, stop the treatment and seek advice from your Pharmacist or GP.

1. Salicylic acid paint is available over-the-counter. Ask your pharmacist for advice and always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Most need to be applied daily. Soaking your foot in water for 5-10 minutes before application will allow better penetration of the solution.

Warning: Salicylic acid is not recommended for patients with loss of sensation, poor circulation, diabetes, or patients who are pregnant. If the surrounding skin becomes red or painful, soak your foot for 10-15 minutes in water with 2-3 tablespoons of normal household salt added.

2. Occlusive tape such as zinc oxide tape can be used daily. This will make the wart softer and less painful.

Warning: Do not use duct tape as it is not a medical tape and can lead to skin irritation. Do not use corn plasters.

Many private Podiatrists offer treatments such as cryotherapy or needling. These treatments can sometimes cause discomfort and usually require several appointments. As with other treatments, there is no guarantee these will get rid of your verruca.

How to prevent the spread of verrucae

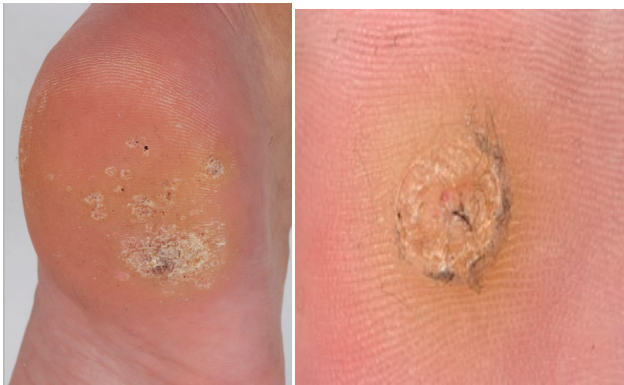
- Avoid touching or scratching verrucae to prevent them from spreading to other parts of your body
- Avoid walking barefoot in swimming pools and changing rooms to prevent spreading it to others
- Use occlusive tape or plasters over the warts or wear special waterproof socks when swimming.

When to seek help

NHS Lothian Podiatry Department does not provide routine treatment for verrucae. However, if the surrounding skin becomes red, hot, swollen and there is fluid or pus leaking, this may be a sign that you have developed a bacterial infection. You should contact your GP or Podiatry Department immediately if this happens.

If you decide to seek help from private Podiatrists make sure they are registered with Health and Care Professional Council (HCPC).

Check the register at: www.hcpc-uk.org



Further information:

Royal College of Podiatry website:

<https://rcpod.org.uk/common-foot-problems/verrucae>

NHS inform website: www.nhsinform.scot - search for: "Warts and verrucas"