

What is a wart?

- A wart is a skin condition.
- It is a hard, tiny bump on the skin.
- Warts are not cancerous.

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What causes it?

- Warts are caused by a virus (called HPV).

Who can get it?

- Warts are more common in children than in adults.
- They are more common in people who are frequently exposed to warts.
- Children who bite their fingernails or pick at hangnails are more likely to get warts.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- A wart is a hard, tiny bump on the skin.
- It may be rough on the surface. It can also be smooth and flat.
- Warts can be white, pink, or brown.
- The inside of the wart might have a black dot or speck that looks like a hair.
- Warts can be found on any part of the body but are common on the fingers, hands, arms, and feet.
- They are often found where the skin has been broken, such as near bitten fingernails or hangnails.
- Warts can also affect the inside of the mouth, the genital area, or the rectal area.
- Warts can sometimes grow in groups.
- A wart on the foot is called a "plantar wart." It may be painful to walk on, as if stepping on a small rock in your shoe.
- Warts on the palms or feet are often flat.
- Warts can get irritated. They might itch or bleed if they become infected. They can get hot, red, and sore.

Is it contagious?

- Yes. Warts are contagious, but they are not highly contagious like a cold.
- The virus that causes warts can be spread by direct and indirect contact.
- You can get the virus from touching another person's wart.
- You can get the virus by using towels or other objects that have touched another person's wart.

How is it treated?

- A wart sometimes disappears without treatment.
- Call your doctor before trying to remove a wart on your infant or young child.
- Call your doctor if your child has warts on his face or genitals.
- The doctor might recommend that you see a special skin doctor, called a dermatologist.
- There are different ways warts can be removed.
- Lotions, plasters, and ointments sold at the store can sometimes be used to remove a wart. Only use these home treatments on older children.
- These products should be used carefully. Follow the directions. Cover the area with a bandage so the lotion does not get in your child's eyes.
- Doctors may use chemicals to remove a wart. They may freeze or burn the wart, scrape it off, or use surgery to remove it.
- Treating a wart quickly is best. It will help prevent new ones from forming.

How long does it last?

- A wart sometimes disappears after about a month.
- Some warts may last 2-3 years.
- With treatment, warts can be removed in a few days.
- Warts tend to disappear in children sooner than in adults.

Can it be prevented?

- There is no known way to prevent HPV from spreading.
- Treating a wart quickly will help prevent new ones from appearing.

When should I call the doctor?

- Call your doctor before trying to remove a wart on your infant or young child.
- Call your doctor if your child has warts on his face or genitals.
- Call your doctor if your child has a wart that looks infected.
- Call the doctor if you have questions or concerns about your child's treatment or condition.

Quick Answers

- A wart is a hard, tiny bump on the skin caused by a virus.
- Children who bite their fingernails or pick at hangnails are more likely to get warts.
- Warts can be found on any part of the body but are common on the fingers, hands, arms, and feet.
- Warts are contagious. They can be spread by direct and indirect contact.
- Warts sometimes disappear without treatment. Home remedies (such as wart removal creams bought at the store) can be used on older children. Warts on sensitive areas of the body (such as the genitals or face) or on young children and infants should be treated by a doctor.
- Warts can last months or even years.
- Treating a wart quickly will help prevent new ones from forming.
- Call your doctor if your child has a wart that looks infected.

References

- American Academy of Dermatology. Warts. 2000 (2002 March 14).
- American Academy of Family Physicians. Warts. Family Doctor. 2002 march (cited 2002 March 15).
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