

Verrucas

These are a type of wart which develops on the soles of the feet which can be itchy or painful. The medical term for verrucas is 'plantar warts'. Children and teenagers are particularly prone to verrucas.

Warts are discussed in more detail as a separate section.

Causes of verrucas

Verrucas are caused by a strain of the human papillomavirus (HPV) which results in a small black spot on the bottom of the foot. This usually appears on the ball of the foot as this takes most of the pressure.

And is why a verruca hurts when you walk or stand for a long period of time.

Symptoms of verrucas

This is a characteristic small black spot on the sole of the foot. This spot is thicker than the surrounding skin and has a smooth surface. Think of it as two concentric circles: one circle is white and hard edged and surrounds a soft, black centre.

Why is a verruca black? The reason for this is bleeding, caused by walking or standing on the verruca.

Is a verruca contagious?

No, but they can be transferred to another person through contact with a wet surface such as a floor.

A good example of this is a damp floor in a communal changing area such as a swimming pool. Someone with a verruca walks across this floor in bare feet which enables the spot to release virus infected cells onto this surface. Another person then walks across the infected surface which is then transferred to their foot and result in the development of a verruca.

If your child has a verruca then stick a plaster over it or ask them to wear a special verruca sock which will stop the infection from spreading to another child.

Not every child develops a verruca, even in a shared environment such as a changing room or a swimming pool. Some children are more prone than others but no-one is sure why this is.

Treatment for verrucas

Verrucas often clear up by themselves but treatment is the preferred option if the verruca is embarrassing, painful or causing a great deal of distress. See your GP if

your verruca bleeds, has changed size or shape or you have a weakened immune system.

Verrucas and warts in general are more difficult to treat in people with weakened immune systems.

Treatment options include:

- Salicylic acid
- Duct tape
- [Cryotherapy](#)
- Chemical treatment
- Verruca plaster

Salicylic acid

This is found in many over the counter remedies such as gels, creams and plasters. It is effective at treating verrucas but it can destroy healthy tissue as well as the infected area. So protect the areas of skin surrounding the verruca with a barrier cream or corn plaster.

Be careful about using products which contain salicylic acid if you suffer from diabetes or a vascular disease. Ask your GP for advice before you buy any of these products.

Duct tape

This is placed over the verruca and left for up to 6 days. Remove the tape and then soak your foot in warm water. Then scrape off any dead skin cells but do this gently. Leave the foot uncovered overnight before applying fresh duct tape the next day. Repeat this process for 1 to 2 months.

Cryotherapy

This is a freezing process in which liquid nitrogen is sprayed onto the verruca which kills the infected skin cells. This forms a blister which then dries out and falls off.

Chemical treatment

This involves using a toxic substance, which contains a chemical such as formaldehyde, on the verruca. The chemical kills the virus infected skin cells and the verruca.

Verruca plaster

These are small round plasters soaked in salicylic acid and are applied to the verruca. You remove and replace these on a daily basis. Soak your foot first and then scrape away any infected areas before applying the plaster.

Complications of verrucas

Treatment can cause pain, inflammation and the formation of blisters around the infected area. Plus verrucas do not respond well to treatment in people with a compromised immune system due to a serious illness, e.g. cancer.

There is a slight risk of malignancy in a verruca or wart but this is very rare.

Preventing verrucas

Wear a verruca sock or flip flops and cover the area with a plaster if you are in communal areas such as swimming pools. Do not rub, pick or scratch the verruca.

If your child has a verruca then prevent them from sharing their socks or shoes with other children. And don't let your child share them with someone who has a verruca.