

HIGHFIELD SURGERY

WARTS & VERRUCAE



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Common warts are small rough lumps on the skin. They are caused by a virus (human papilloma virus) which causes a reaction in the skin.

Verrucae are essentially the same as warts. They are caused by the same virus; however as they are on the foot they tend to get 'trodden in', therefore they look flatter and broader than warts found on other parts of the body.

Are they harmful?

No. Occasionally verrucae are painful if they press on sensitive parts of the foot. The worst thing about warts is that they can be unsightly. However as they are caused by a virus, they are contagious, although many people are immune to the virus and never develop warts. This is why warts and verrucae are much more common in children than adults. Many adults will have had them as a child, but are now clear of them.

If left alone, most warts and verrucae will go, although it may take up to 2 years or more. This is the normal 'life cycle' of a wart.

To treat or not to treat?

Before starting any treatment for warts, first consider the option of not treating. They will usually go away and are not harmful. Treatments are sometimes time-consuming and can be painful. There is no specific treatment – treatment involves destruction of the skin and may lead to scars. Parents often wish their children to be treated, but in fact the child is not bothered by the wart or verrucae. Simply waiting for the wart or verrucae to go would sometimes be the best thing to do.

Treatment options

Acid preparations – can be bought at pharmacies or obtained by prescription. There is a variety of preparations. Dedication and perseverance are needed for them all. Usually a daily application is required. This 'burns' off the top layer. After a few days, rub down the top layer of the wart with a pumice stone or nail file. Keep on repeating this for several weeks (usually 70% success if persevered over 12 weeks). Gradually the wart is 'burnt' and 'rubbed' away – take care not to get the acid on the surrounding skin which it may burn.

Burning, freezing, or cutting - various methods are used to 'cauterise', 'freeze', or cut out warts and verrucae. This depends on the local doctors' or chiropodists' preference, or skill.

These methods can be too painful, particularly for children. This method is only partially successful and needs repeated applications.



Can I go swimming?

If you or your child has a wart or verruca, going swimming is fine as long as you take steps to prevent the spread of infection.

You can put a waterproof plaster over the wart or verruca. Special rubber verruca socks are also available from pharmacies.

Wearing pool slippers or flip-flops around swimming pools and in communal changing areas will also reduce the risk of getting verrucas or passing them on to others