

Warts

Fact Sheet



Plantar warts are small, rough, round growths that are medically known as verrucae and occur on the hands and feet. They're caused by a virus called the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and are often contracted in childhood. Once you've contracted the virus, you'll always have it in your system, so plantar warts may spontaneously recur throughout your lifetime.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Plantar warts are relatively small and often have a rounded but grainy appearance. You may develop one wart or many at the same time. Other signs include:

- Small black pinpoint dots (clotted blood vessels)
- Bumps on the surface of the warts
- The lines of the skin of the foot go through the wart, not around the wart like with corns
- Callus may cover the wart if it's in a weight bearing area
- Pain on pinching the wart from the sides
- Pain when walking if it is on a weight bearing area, otherwise it may be barely noticeable

What causes plantar warts?

The HPV virus is the cause of plantar warts and is spread through direct contact. If you have a break in the skin, like a small cut or graze, then you may contract the virus through sharing the same surface like a shower or a floor. Once you contract the virus, it may take months for the wart to develop.

Immune systems do respond differently and not everyone that comes in contact with the virus will develop plantar warts. Similarly, a weakened immune system may make you more susceptible.

Managing plantar warts at home

If your wart is not causing you any pain or discomfort, you may not wish to treat it. Warts can resolve on their own, though sometimes this can take years.

Over the counter wart pads are available from the pharmacy, however, we cannot recommend using these as they contain an acid that does not differentiate between healthy tissue and wart tissue. This means that it can cause a chemical burn to the healthy skin surrounding the wart.

If you have a systemic condition like diabetes, you should definitely avoid using these pads and see your Podiatrist for treatment, guidance and best long-term outcomes. This is because diabetes puts you at risk for complications and problems with healing.

When managing plantar warts, it is important that you ensure that you have an accurate diagnosis, as corns and warts share many similar features and can be mistaken for one another. This is where your Podiatrist can confirm the diagnosis so that appropriate treatment can be implemented.

How your Podiatrist can help

As plantar warts are a virus, they can be difficult to treat and can recur spontaneously. Your Podiatrist will discuss with you the suitable treatment options for you based on your medical history. Treatments can include:

- Topical chemicals and medications such as salicylic acid
- Silver nitrate
- Dry needling
- Cryotherapy, or freezing the warts off
- Heat therapy, or burning the warts off
- Surgery to remove the wart

Disclaimer: This document is an informative guide only and is not a tool for diagnosis. If you suspect that you have a wart and it is causing you discomfort or you would like to have it treated, we recommend that you see your Podiatrist for an accurate diagnosis and an appropriate treatment plan that complies with any medical consideration you have. Referrals are not required to see your Podiatrist.