

PLANTAR WARTS

What causes plantar warts?

Plantar warts are ordinary warts of the sole, or plantar surface, of the foot. Since plantar warts are on a pressure area, they grow inward and are often tender and painful. Like other warts, plantar warts are caused by a virus and are harmless.

Treatment

There are many ways of treating plantar warts. All involve destroying the warts. So far there is not a perfect treatment for plantar warts. It is preferable to treat plantar warts by destroying them chemically, especially if on a weight-bearing part of the sole. This treatment is painless and will let you engage in your usual activities. It usually succeeds if carried out according to instructions. It will take several weeks or months. You will be given a name of a medicine that is to be used as follows:

- At bedtime, put a tiny amount of wart-destroying medicine, such as Duofilm® or Mediplast®, exactly on your warts as directed by your health care provider. Put the medicine only on the warts; it may irritate normal skin.
- If the wart-destroying medicine is a liquid, let it dry for 5 minutes so it won't spread to normal skin when covered with tape.
- Cover your warts with waterproof adhesive tape (athletic or duct tape). The tape keeps your skin moist. The moisture softens the surface of the warts so the medicine will penetrate them. It's all right to get the tape wet.
- In the morning, remove the adhesive tape. If your skin tears when you do this, loosen the tape by painting nail-polish remover between your skin and the tape with a cotton-tipped applicator.
- After a few days, the outside of the warts will start to turn gray. This means the chemical has begun to destroy them. Scrape this gray wart tissue off with the point of a metal nail file every second or third day. Do the scraping after a bath or shower has softened the wart's surface. Be sure to remove *every bit* of dead wart tissue; otherwise, it will keep the wart-destroying medicine from reaching the living tissue underneath. Sometimes, a small, curved scissors or a pumice stone helps in removing the dead wart tissue. Whatever you use for scraping your warts should not be used for anything else, because warts are somewhat contagious.
- If the warts become sore, stop the treatment for a few days.
- If you don't see much progress after 2 to 3 weeks, try leaving the tape on until noon, or even longer. Stubborn warts may need to be covered continuously with tape for 5 days. Leave medicine off for 2 days. Then reapply it.
- If your plantar warts hurt when you stand or walk, wear a pad cut out of Dr Scholl's Foot and Shoe Padding (available without prescription). Cut a hole or holes corresponding to where the warts are. This will take the pressure off the warts.
- Continue the treatment until you believe the warts are gone. If you can see the lines of your skin crossing the treated area, the warts are probably gone. If after you stop treatment the warts are still present – it happens – treat them again until you are more certain the warts have gone away.
- If necessary, continue the treatment for 4 months. If the warts have not been destroyed after 4 months of treatment, return to University Health Services; a different approach will be used.
- If the warts become painful or infected, return to the UHS at once.

Adapted from W.B. Sanders Company.

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