

Warts

What are warts?

Warts are harmless skin growths caused by a virus. Warts can grow on any part of your child's body. How they look depends on where they are on the body. Warts on the soles of the feet (called plantar warts) can be painful to walk on.

Warts are common and can be a nuisance. They are contagious and can be spread by touch. We do not know why some people get warts while others never get them. There is no way to prevent warts.

Warts will often go away on their own in young children. It is less common for warts to go away on their own in older children and adults.

How are warts treated?

It can be a challenge to treat warts, and there is no cure that works in all cases. The goal of treatment is to get rid of the outer layer of skin on which the wart grows. Sometimes new warts will form while the current ones are being destroyed. Some warts are very stubborn and will not respond to many treatments. Warts may come back weeks or months after they seemed to go away.

Liquid nitrogen

Liquid nitrogen is a substance used to freeze warts. It can cause mild pain while the wart is being frozen and then thaws. After treatment, your child's skin may become swollen and red, and it may blister. A scab or crust may form that should fall off in 1 to 3 weeks, and the wart underneath should be smaller or gone. Sometimes, the wart will just come off or get smaller without a scab or crust. Warts often need repeat treatments.

Most of the time, no special care is needed after liquid nitrogen treatment. Wash your child's skin as usual. If clothing bothers the treated spot or if the blister breaks and the skin is open, apply a small amount of antibiotic ointment and cover it with a band-aid. Check with your child's healthcare provider first before giving any type of ointment to your child.

Can warts be treated at home?

These are some of the ways warts can be treated at home:

Salicylic acid

Salicylic acid is a wart medicine you can buy at a drugstore (over-the-counter). If your child's wart was treated with liquid nitrogen, wait at least 5 to 7 days before starting this treatment at home. Check with your child's healthcare provider first before giving any type of over-the-counter medicine to your child.

To Learn More

- Dermatology
206-987-2158
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

1. Soak the wart in warm water for 10 to 15 minutes.
2. Use a pumice stone, foot file or soft, disposable nail file or emery board to file away dead skin on top of the wart. Do not share the file with others or use for any other purpose. Once the wart is gone, throw the file away.
3. Use a wart medicine that contains 17% salicylic acid liquid or gel (such as Compound W, DuoFilm, Wart-off or a generic brand). Apply it to the wart and let it dry. Avoid getting it on the healthy skin.
4. Cover the wart with duct tape or the sticky part of a band-aid before your child goes to bed. Put on a new piece of tape or band-aid every night before bed.

Repeat these steps each night until the wart is gone. This can take up to 3 months. Some wart medicines can cause healthy skin to turn red or blister. If this happens, stop the treatment for 1 to 2 days. You can try putting petroleum jelly (Vaseline) on the healthy skin around the wart before you apply the medicine to keep this from happening.

Other treatment options

These are some of the other treatments that we use to treat warts. Ask your child's healthcare team about them if you have questions. Some of these treatments happen in clinic, while others can happen at home.

- Covering wart with duct tape
- Imiquimod (Aldara)
- Squaric acid
- Injection of yeast
- Laser treatment