

WARTS: TREATMENT OPTIONS AND AFTER TREATMENT CARE

What are warts?

Warts are raised, typically round, rough-surfaced growths on the skin. They occur most often on the hands and feet. They are not painful unless they are on the bottom of the foot (called plantar warts). Unlike a callus, a wart has brown dots in it and has a distinct boundary with the normal skin. Warts are caused by viruses.

In our office, there are 3 main ways in which wart removal may be attempted:

1. **CRYOTHERAPY:** this is the use of liquid nitrogen to achieve a very cold temperature and create a “cold blister” that works to physically destroy wart virus. After-care is minimal and may involve release of fluid* if small blisters form, (which rarely occurs) but otherwise little care is needed other than use of a Band-Aid if there is a temporary increase in skin sensitivity.
2. **CANTHARIDIN (“BEETLE JUICE”):** This is the use of a biologic agent from a “blister beetle” that is used to create a “chemical blister” that works to physically destroy a wart virus. After-care commonly involves release of fluid* from blister formation (which almost always occurs) and in some individuals is more impressive than others. After fluid is removed from blister(s), routine care with Band-Aids and/or Neosporin type medication is recommended.
3. **IMMUNOTHERAPY:** This method involves use of immunologic agents (Candida and/or Trichophyton) to create an immune response from the body by injecting an immunologic agent directly into wart. Other than covering with a Band-Aid, no after care typically is required. However, it may be necessary to receive several treatments every 3 - 4 weeks until adequate resolution is obtained.

There is no one method that works all the time for all wart viruses and wart viruses can be resistant to treatment. Removal technique will vary from physician to physician and is often based on presentation. Response to treatment will vary from patient to patient. If the above techniques are not found to be ultimately effective, it is possible to consider referral to a dermatologist. Also, since warts themselves are not considered dangerous, treatment is voluntary and not required.

*If your blister does not break on its own and is uncomfortable, you can puncture it with sterile pin or needle, or snip it with a sterile scissors, which is a painless procedure. You can sterilize these instruments by holding under a hot flame until they become “red hot” (or sterilizing with rubbing alcohol could be a second alternative). Don’t peel off the roof of the blister; it will help to prevent any infection. You will get instant relief after the blister is punctured. Be sure to keep the site clean with tap water and cover it with antibiotic ointment or plain Vaseline and a Band-Aid. Keep the area covered with antibiotic ointment or Vaseline at all times until the wound has completely healed.