

Warts

Warts are bumps on the skin and may feel rough to the touch. The technical name for warts is verruca vulgaris. Warts appear in areas of skin that grow faster than normal due to a virus called human papilloma virus (HPV). Warts can spread and some people can more easily get them. There is no cure for the HPV virus. Most people will naturally fight off the virus from their body within 2-3 years of getting a wart. However, warts can come back. Warts on hands can be uncomfortable and embarrassing to have, but are not cancerous.

Symptoms

Warts can be very itchy, can bleed if irritated, and the skin around them can become uncomfortable. Warts on fingers are sometimes confused with other problems such as fluid filled sacs (cysts) or bone spurs from arthritis.

Treatment

A primary care physician or dermatologist are often the first physicians to treat warts. There are many different treatment options. While it is very rare, it is important to know that a perceived wart that does not respond to regular treatment can be a sign of a developing skin cancer lesion.

Treatments include simple solutions such as placing duct tape over the wart after rubbing it with a pumice stone. Other methods may include applying salicylic acid or liquid nitrogen to freeze the wart. If these methods do not work, a chemical called cantharidin may be used. Finally, surgical excision or biopsy might be indicated for warts that do not seem to go away or are in areas that are hard to treat with other methods.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember when treating a wart is patience. Tried and true treatments generally work but take time.

Figure 1. Picture of a hand with a wart.

