

**Title: Do You Know?**

**Subtitle: What are Warts?**

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### **What are Warts**

Warts and verrucas are small, non-cancerous growths within the skin caused by the human papilloma virus.

Warts may occur on their own or in clusters. There are many different types of warts.

**Common warts.** These raised growths, which have a hard, uneven surface, are the most common type of wart and usually appear on the hands and feet.

**Plantar warts,** known as verrucas. These are warts on the soles of the feet that are pushed into the skin surface by the weight of the body.

**Plane warts.** These are smaller and flatter, and mostly occur on the hands.

They're caused by a viral infection in the skin cells. The virus is called human papilloma virus (HPV) - there are more than 100 types of HPV.

Warts are common and all children are vulnerable, but children with immune system problems have an increased risk. The virus is present throughout the environment and the risk of catching them from public places is now debatable.

Each wart forms a small lump, but sometimes multiple warts fuse together. Common warts are rarely painful, but plane warts may be itchy.

Verrucas form round areas in the skin, often with a central dark spot. They usually disappear when pressure is applied.

Most warts disappear without treatment after a few months or years - 20% of common warts disappear within three months. Their duration is influenced by changes in the immune system and the HPV virus.

Warts and verrucas only need treatment if they're painful or are a cosmetic problem. Simple treatments can be applied at home, including a combination of salicylic acid and pumice stone or foot scraper. Stronger treatments can be obtained from a doctor. Talk to your doctor if a wart doesn't respond to simple treatment or disappears and then returns.

Other treatments your GP may recommend include laser or cryotherapy (freezing) or curettage to scrape warts out. These treatments are quite effective, but warts can recur. Very resistant warts can be injected with toxic chemicals.