

Verruca

A patient's guide

Whittington Health Podiatry do not treat verruca in clinic; this information will help you treat your concern at home.

What causes verrucae?

Verrucae are plantar warts that commonly occur on the soles of the feet or around the toe area. They are caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), which is contagious through direct person-to-person contact. The HPV virus is thought to thrive in moist, damp environments such as swimming pools, changing room floors and communal shower areas. It is possible to contract verrucae simply by walking across the same floor area as someone with a verruca, especially if you have any small or invisible cuts or abrasions that make it easier for the virus to penetrate.

How do I know I have them?

The most common appearance is that of a small cauliflower-type growth on the soles of your feet with tiny black dots. If it is painful when you pinch the area (like when you squeeze a spot), you are likely to have a verruca. They can grow to 1cm in diameter and may spread into a cluster of small warts.



What are the treatments?

In the first instance, avoid touching or scratching a verruca as it may spread into a cluster of warts. Instead, cover it up with sterile plaster. In many cases, evidence suggests that verrucae will disappear of their own accord within six months for children but longer for adults (up to two years). This is because the body's immune system recognises the presence of the virus and fights the infection naturally. If it is painless, no treatment may be required as some treatments can be painful or cause side-effects. For painful and/or unsightly verrucae or ones that are spreading, you can self-treat using ointments and gels from your local pharmacist following the individual instructions carefully. Gently rubbing away the dry skin over a verruca, using a foot file or pumice stone and applying a plaster helps to stimulate the body's immune system to fight the infection.

However, if your verruca becomes unusually painful or the surrounding skin area goes red, stop treatment immediately. This is because if the healthy tissue around a verruca is damaged, you could hamper further treatment.

When should I seek attention?

- If you have diabetes or poor circulation, are pregnant or have any other condition affecting your feet (or your immune system), it is important never to treat a verruca yourself using over the counter medicine without speaking to a health care professional first.
- If you are worried about your verruca and/or self-treatment is not working and/or the verruca appears to be getting larger or more painful, visit your GP or a health care professional.

If you experience any foot care issues that do not resolve themselves naturally or through routine foot care within three weeks, it is recommended that you seek the help of a healthcare professional.

Who should I see?

Whittington Health Podiatry does not offer review of Verrucae lesions. You should seek advice from your GP or practice nurse who can arrange an onward referral to a local Dermatology clinic or you can contact The Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists for information on local care providers.

<https://www.scpod.org> or 020 7234 8620

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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