



Pediatric Clinic

# Warts

## What are warts?

Warts are raised, round, rough-surfaced growths on the skin. They occur most often on the hands. Warts 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 clear boundary with the normal skin.

Warts are caused by papillomaviruses.

## How long will they last?

Warts are harmless. Most warts disappear without treatment in 2 or 3 years. With treatment they are usually gone in 2 to 3 months.

## How can I take care of my child?

- **Cover the wart with duct tape**

Cover the wart with a small piece of duct tape (not regular adhesive tape). Warts deprived of air and sun exposure sometimes die without the need for treatment with acids. Remove the tape once a week. Wash the skin and rub off any dead wart tissue. After it has dried thoroughly overnight, reapply duct tape. The tape treatment may be needed for 8 weeks.

- **Wart-removing acid medicines**

To get faster results with the duct tape, use an OTC wart medicine. They all contain 17% salicylic acid.

Put the medicine on the wart once a day, enough to cover the entire wart. Cover the wart with duct tape after you put the medicine on the wart. Make sure that you don't get any of the medicine near the eyes or mouth.

The medicine will turn the top of the wart into dead skin (it will all turn white). Once or twice a week, remove the dead wart material by paring it down with a disposable razor. If that is hard for you to do, rub the dead skin off with a pumice stone or washcloth. The dead wart will be softer and easier to remove if you soak the area first in warm water for 10 minutes. If the cutting causes any pain or minor bleeding, you have cut into living wart tissue.

- **Contagiousness**

Encourage your child not to pick at the warts because this may cause the warts to spread. If your child chews or sucks the wart, cover the area with duct tape and change it as often as necessary. Encourage your child to give up this habit because chewing on warts can cause warts on the lips or face. Warts are not very contagious to other people.

## When should I call my child's healthcare provider?

Call during office hours if:

- Warts develop on the feet, hands, genitals, or face.
- New warts develop after 2 weeks of treatment.
- The warts are still present after 8 weeks of treatment.
- You have other concerns or questions.

Written by Barton D. Schmitt, MD, author of "My Child Is Sick", American Academy of Pediatrics Books. Pediatric Advisor 2012.2 published by [RelayHealth](#).

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