

Warts (common, flat & plantar)



Warts are lumpy growths in the skin caused by infection with human papilloma viruses (HPV), of which there are more than 100 known types. Most wart infections are harmless and disappear within two years, often without needing treatment.

Human papilloma viruses are common worldwide. Animal papilloma viruses cannot infect people.

Different types of papilloma virus infect different areas of the body (see also genital warts).

How warts are spread

The wart virus is thought to be transmitted by direct skin to skin contact or by contact with contaminated surfaces, for example floors.

Signs and symptoms

Common warts

Warts develop on the skin of children and adolescents and mainly occur on the knuckles, the back of the hands and the knees. Sometimes such warts appear as a group.

Flat warts

These are flat-topped and are most common on the face and the back of the hands.

Plantar warts

These occur on the soles of the feet and sometimes on the palms of the hands. They are commonly found in older children and adolescents.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is usually made by examination of the growth, but occasionally a doctor may request a scraping or biopsy.

Incubation period

(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)

2 to 3 months but ranging from 1 to 20 months.

Infectious period

(time during which an infected person can infect others)

Unknown, but at least as long as visible warts persist.

Treatment

About 65% of warts will go away by themselves within 2 years. If treatment is necessary, the following may be used:

- > liquid nitrogen
- > chemical paint applications
- > surgical removal
- > laser therapy.

Prevention

Exclusion from childcare, preschool, school or work is not necessary

Wart infection can be prevented by the following measures:

- > avoid direct contact with warts
- > wear shoes
- > wash hands after any contact with warts.

Useful links

- > You've Got What?:
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/YouveGotWhat
 - Genital warts.

You've Got What? Warts

Communicable Disease Control Branch
Telephone: 1300 232 272
Email: HealthCommunicableDiseases@sa.gov.au
The SA Health Disclaimer for this resource is located at
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youvegotwhat

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*SA Health Safety and Quality Community Advisory Group.



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