

Let's Talk About...

Warts in children

What is a wart?

A wart is a small area of hardened skin that usually has a bumpy surface. Warts come in many sizes, colors, and shapes. They can appear anywhere on the body. Kids get them most often on the hands, feet, and face.

Why do children get warts?

Anybody can get warts, but kids get them more often than adults do. Lots of kids get warts, although some kids never get any warts at all. Doctors really don't know why some kids get warts. It could be that some people's immune (IH-myoon) systems, which fight infections, make them less likely to get warts.

Viruses cause warts. They're called human papilloma (pah-pih-LOH-mah) viruses, or HPV for short.

HPV viruses are like other germs. The wart virus loves warm, moist places like small cuts or scratches on your hands or feet. Once the virus finds a nice warm place on the skin, a wart begins to develop. Warts can grow for many months — sometimes a year or more — before they are big enough to see. So if you do get a wart, you may never know where you came into contact with HPV.

Will warts go away without treatment?

Warts can go away on their own, and 6 out of 10 warts will disappear within 2 years. However, your child may be worried about the wart or may be self-conscious about it. Plantar warts (on the bottom of the feet) can also be painful.

If you or your child are concerned about the wart, there are ways to treat it. Your child may need several different treatments to make the wart go away completely. Sometimes these treatments can take months.



How do I treat warts at home?

You can find many wart treatments at drug stores, including salicylic (sal-ih-SILL-ic) acid liquid, pads, or tape. Here's how to treat your child's wart at home:

- Soak the wart in warm water for 5 minutes at night.
- Use a nail file or pumice stone to file thick warts. Only use the nail file or pumice stone for the wart so you don't spread the virus.
- Put the wart medicine directly on the wart. Use petroleum jelly on the skin around the wart so you don't put medicine on normal skin.
- Cover the wart medicine, including the pad or tape if you're using it, with duct tape. If you are using liquid salicylic acid, let it dry completely before putting duct tape over it.
- Leave the tape on at least overnight or for 24 hours, if possible.
- Repeat these steps every night until the wart is gone. This can take 2–4 months.
- Do not use this medicine on the face or groin area unless your child's healthcare provider tells you to.

The skin of the wart will be white and moist during treatment. If your child's skin becomes too sore, take a break from the treatment.

What prescription medicines can my child use to treat warts?

Your child's healthcare provider may prescribe the following treatments to get rid of your child's wart:

- Retinoid creams to treat warts on the face and groin
- 5-fluorouracil (five-FLOOR-oh-yur-a-sill) cream to treat warts on the face and groin
- Imiquimod (im-ICK-quee-mod) cream to treat warts on the face and groin
- Compounded wart medicine to treat warts on the hands and feet
- Oral cimetidine (sim-MET-uh-deen) for boosting the immune system

How does my child's healthcare provider treat warts?

- You can also have your child's healthcare provider treat the wart in the office. Multiple visits may be needed. Here are a few common treatments:
- **Cryotherapy:** The healthcare provider uses a cold spray (usually liquid nitrogen) to freeze the wart. This may cause a blister.
- **Candida antigen injections:** The healthcare provider injects extracts of the yeast Candida into or under the wart. Candida shots can help the immune system recognize the wart virus and get rid of it. Your child will need multiple shots about one month apart.
- **Paring:** The healthcare provider may scrape or file the wart to make it easier for other treatments to work.
- **Laser treatment:** The healthcare provider uses a laser to burn and destroy wart tissue.
- **Squaric acid:** The healthcare provider applies these agents directly to the wart.

Notes

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