Warts and Verrucae

Patient information leaflet

Common Ailments Service

Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your or your child's condition.

Warts and verrucae are small, rough lumps on the skin. They are caused by a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV). They are common, and you can get them at any age. However, it is unusual for babies or very small children to get them.

A wart

Warts are usually round and skin coloured. They usually appear on the hands and feet, but they can develop anywhere on the body. Verrucae are warts that develop on the soles of the feet. They may look flat because they get trodden in. Often, you will see black dots under the hard skin.

A verruca

You may get 1 or 2 warts, or several warts may develop together. Although warts do not cause harm, they can be painful (especially verrucae), itchy and embarrassing.

Treatment and Prevention

Warts and verrucae can last for several years. Some people choose to treat them. This may get rid of them sooner, but it will probably still take several weeks. The treatment can irritate your skin.

Medicines that can help

These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for you or your child.

You can use **salicylic acid** to treat warts and verrucae. It comes in different strengths and forms, for example as a paint, gel or ointment. Salicylic acid works by softening the outer layer of your skin. This can allow it to loosen and peel away. Applying it at night may mean that it is less likely to be rubbed off. You should wash your hands after applying the medicine.

You should read the patient information leaflet that comes with the medicine. It will tell you how to use the medicine safely. Salicylic acid is not suitable for use on certain parts of your body, such as your face or large areas of skin.

Treatments containing salicylic acid can easily catch fire. Keep them away from flames, sparks and hot surfaces. Salicylic acid may also damage fabrics and other materials.

Use salicylic acid treatment until the wart or verruca has gone, and for a maximum of 12 weeks. If the skin around the area you are treating becomes sore, stop the treatment for a few days until it settles, then restart it. If the irritation is severe, or your skin becomes very red and itchy, you may have an allergy. Stop using salicylic acid and ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice.

Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.

If you think a medicine is causing side effects, tell a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects using the Yellow Card app or at yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk

Treatment and Prevention

Warts and verrucae can spread to other people, or other parts of your own body.

To stop warts and verrucas spreading:

- wash your hands after touching a wart or verruca
- do not pick or scratch your wart or verruca
- do not bite your nails or suck fingers that have warts
- change your socks every day if you have a verruca
- cover your wart or verruca with a waterproof plaster when you go swimming
- do not walk barefoot in public places if you have a verruca
- do not share shoes, socks and towels

You are more likely to get a verruca if your skin is wet or damaged.

When to Get Help

Ask for a **GP appointment** if you or your child:

- have finished a 12-week course of treatment and the wart or verruca is still there

Ask for an **urgent GP appointment** or **call 111** if you or your child:

- have a wart that develops on the face, or in a skin fold (such as underarms or breasts)
- have a fingernail or toenail that is getting damaged by a wart
- have a lot of warts or verrucae, or get them often
- have a wart or verruca that is bleeding, has hair growing out of it, or looks different from before
- have a wart or verruca that looks like it is getting infected
- have a wart or verruca that is very painful or making you upset

Call your **sexual health clinic** if you or your child have a wart around the genitals or anus.

If you are worried that your or your child's condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.

More information

For more information on warts, verrucae, or medicines, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS 111 Wales: 111.wales.nhs.uk/Encyclopaedia/w/article/wartsandverrucas

Patient UK: www.patient.info/skin-conditions/warts-and-verrucas-leaflet

Medicines A-Z: www.nhs.uk/medicines/ look up the name of the medicine you want more information on.

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.

Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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