

UNDERSTANDING WARTS: A PHARMACIST'S GUIDE

Warts are common, benign skin growths caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). As frontline healthcare providers, pharmacists play a crucial role in educating patients about wart identification, treatment options, and when to seek medical attention.

WHAT ARE WARTS & HOW DO THEY DEVELOP?

Warts are small, rough growths that typically appear on hands, feet, or other areas of the body. They develop when HPV infects the top layer of skin through tiny cuts or breaks. The virus causes rapid growth of keratin, a hard protein in the epidermis, resulting in the characteristic rough texture of warts.

CAUSES & CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- **Viral Origin:** Caused by over 150 types of human papillomavirus (HPV)
- **Transmission:** Direct skin-to-skin contact or indirect contact with contaminated surfaces
- **Risk Factors:** Weakened immune system, damaged skin, frequent exposure to moist environments (e.g., public showers), sharing personal items like towels or razors

COMMON SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Small, fleshy, grainy bumps
- Rough texture to touch
- Flesh-colored, white, pink, or tan appearance
- Black pinpoints (clotted blood vessels)
- May cause pain or tenderness, especially plantar warts on feet
- Can appear singly or in clusters

GOALS OF TREATMENT

- Eliminate the wart completely
- Prevent spread to other body areas or people
- Minimize scarring and complications
- Provide symptomatic relief from pain or discomfort

WHEN TO REFER TO A PHYSICIAN

- Warts that are painful, change color, or bleed
- Warts on face, genitals, or anal area
- Warts in patients with diabetes or poor circulation
- Warts that don't respond to OTC treatment after 12 weeks
- Multiple warts or rapidly spreading warts
- Immunocompromised patients
- Uncertain diagnosis

OVER-THE-COUNTER TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment Type	Active Ingredient	Application	Duration
Salicylic Acid	17-40%	Daily application after soaking	Up to 12 weeks
Freezing Products	Dimethyl ether/propane	Single application	1-2 weeks per treatment
Duct Tape	Occlusive method	Cover wart continuously	Up to 2 months
Combination Products	Salicylic acid + freezing	Follow package directions	Varies by product

NON-PHARMACOLOGICAL & PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

- Keep feet dry and clean
- Wear protective footwear in public areas (showers, pools)
- Avoid picking or scratching warts
- Don't share personal items (towels, razors, nail clippers)
- Cover warts with bandages
- Maintain good hand hygiene
- Boost immune system through healthy lifestyle

FOLLOW-UP GUIDANCE

- Monitor progress weekly
- Discontinue treatment if no improvement after 4 weeks
- Seek medical attention if signs of infection appear (redness, swelling, pus)
- Complete full course of treatment even if wart appears resolved
- Return for consultation if new warts develop during treatment

Your Community Pharmacist: Your Partner in Health Education

For personalized advice on wart treatment and other minor skin conditions, consult your pharmacist today!