

PLANTAR WARTS: DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENTS

What are plantar warts? Warts on the foot, often called plantar warts, are a viral infection within the skin's outer layer, called the epidermis. There are many different viruses that cause warts, all of which cause warts of varying size and shapes. Warts are most commonly found in young adults and teens, but can be found in any age group. They are thought to be contracted by direct contact through damp surfaces or shoe gear. Once beneath the skin's outer barrier, the virus proliferates and may grow or produce satellite lesions. Prompt treatment usually has better results.

Symptoms: Plantar warts can be very painful, especially if they are found on the bottom of the foot under a prominent weight bearing area. They usually bleed easily with trimming of the overlying skin. They can easily be confused with a corn or callous, but are treated very differently.

Diagnosis: Diagnosis of a suspicious lesion can easily be confirmed by biopsy. However, most trained physicians and podiatrists can easily identify a wart without a biopsy.

Treatment: As with any foot problem, there are conservative and surgical methods of treatment. Perhaps the most frustrating problem with warts is that all warts do not respond the same way to all modalities of treatment. Therefore, people often must endure several treatments over the course of several months before they find what works for them. Common conservative treatments include topical acid treatments, freezing of the lesion, and antiviral creams with daily debridement. Surgical resection of the lesions usually results in resolution of the wart, but temporarily the patient has the discomfort associated with resection. Also, there is the potential for deep scarring with surgical excision. It is the doctor's belief that one or two conservative methods be tried, then surgical excision should be planned to eradicate the lesion. With any method of treatment, there is always a chance of the lesion recurring.

Summary: Plantar warts can be a very stubborn problem for a patient and physician. Any suspicious lesion on the foot should be evaluated and treated by a trained professional.

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