

Preventing Warts

Human papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that causes warts, can be found everywhere, and it spreads easily from person to person. It can be difficult to prevent warts completely, but there are precautions that can reduce your risk of getting warts:

- Avoid touching someone's wart. HPV can get inside your body through a cut or scratch.
- Make sure that everyone in your home has their own towels, washcloths, razors, nail clippers, socks, and other personal items.
- Clean and cover cuts and scrapes so that if you touch something contaminated with HPV, the virus can't get inside your body through a cut or scrape.
- Wash your hands often. This helps to remove HPV from your skin.
- Prevent dry, cracked skin. When skin is cracked and dry, HPV can enter your body through a crack in your skin.
- Stop nail biting and cuticle chewing. These habits cause sores and tears in the skin that are too tiny to see but large enough for HPV to enter.
- Wear flip-flops or pool shoes in public showers, pool facilities, and locker rooms. HPV thrives in warm, moist areas. When your skin is moist and soft, HPV can more easily get into your system.

What Are Warts?

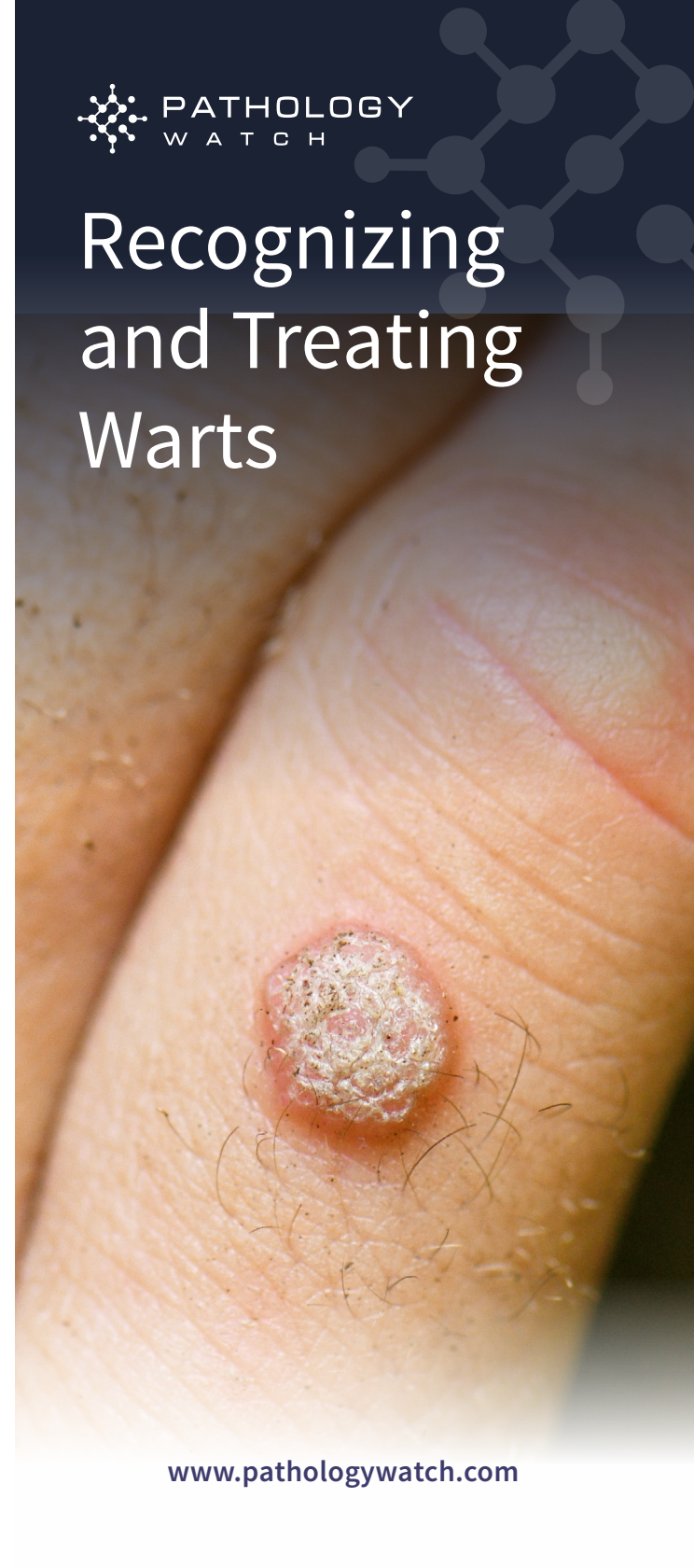
- Warts are benign (i.e., not cancerous) skin growths that are often rough and skin-colored but can also be flat or smooth and gray-black. Warts appear when a human papillomavirus (HPV) infects the top layer of the skin, usually through a cut in the skin.
- Wart viruses are contagious and can spread through contact with the wart or something that touched the wart.

At-Home Remedies for Warts

Warts often go away without treatment, but if they don't, at-home remedies may work. Here are two:

- **Salicylic Acid**
This medicine is available over the counter and comes in different forms: a gel, liquid, or pad. Every day, soak the wart in warm water and apply the salicylic acid according to package directions. Continue daily for several weeks or until the wart is gone. If this treatment doesn't work, your dermatologist can help.
- **Duct Tape**
Put duct tape over the wart and change the tape every few days. This may peel away layers of the wart. Studies are inconclusive about whether this treatment really gets rid of warts, but it is relatively harmless.

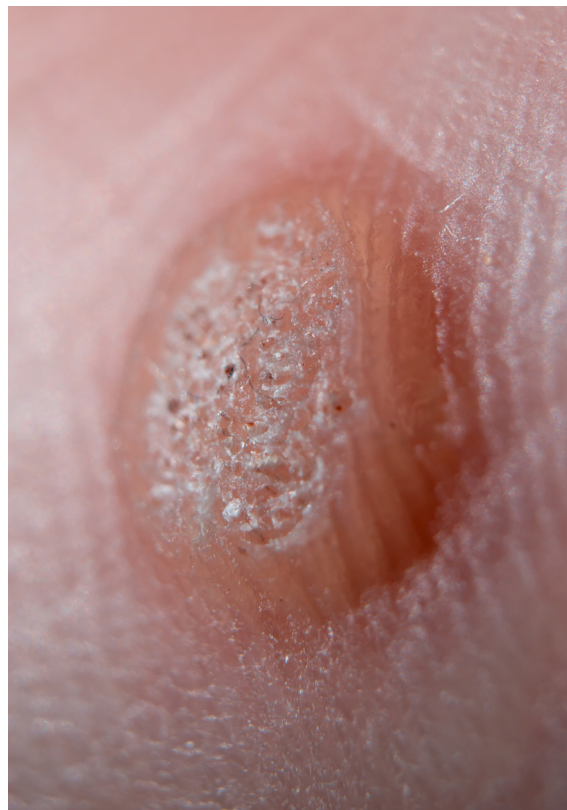
Recognizing and Treating Warts



Treatment for Warts

Seek treatment from a dermatologist if you cannot get rid of your warts, the warts hurt, or you have many warts. Here are some treatments a dermatologist may use:

- **Cantharidin**
The dermatologist “paints” the wart with cantharidin, causing a blister to form under it. About a week later, the dermatologist will clip away the dead wart.
- **Cryotherapy**
The dermatologist freezes the common wart. The treatment can cause dark spots in people who have dark skin, and repeat treatments may be necessary.
- **Electrosurgery and Curettage**
Electrosurgery treats common warts, filiform warts, and foot warts by burning them. Curettage scrapes off (curettes) the wart with a small, spoon-shaped tool or sharp knife. These two procedures are often used together.
- **Excision**
The doctor cuts out the wart.



Types of Warts

Name	Location	Appearance	Additional Info
Common Warts	Most commonly on the fingers, around the nails, and on the backs of the hands	Small bumps; may have black dots that look like seeds	May appear where skin was broken, such as from biting fingernails or picking at hangnails; usually rough
Foot Warts (plantar warts)	On the soles (plantar surface) of the feet	Grow in clusters, often flat; may grow inward from the pressure of walking; may have black dots	Can hurt; feels like you have pebbles in your shoe
Flat Warts	Anywhere, though children tend to get them on the face, men in the beard area, and women on the legs	Smaller and smoother than other warts	Tend to grow in large numbers, 20 to 100 at a time
Filiform Warts	Often grow on the face: around the mouth, eyes, and nose	Long threads or thin fingers that stick out	Often grow quickly

If the warts are resistant to treatment, the doctor may recommend one of the following treatments:

- **Laser Treatment**
The light from the laser heats up the blood in the vessels inside the wart, destroying the vessels. Without blood, the wart dies.
- **Chemical Peels**
You apply a peeling medicine at home every day. Peeling medicines include prescription-strength salicylic acid, tretinoin, and glycolic acid.
- **Bleomycin**
The dermatologist injects each wart with bleomycin, an anticancer medicine.
- **Immunotherapy**
This treatment uses the patient’s own immune system to fight the warts. One method applies a chemical like diphencyprone to the warts. A mild allergic reaction occurs around the treatment site, which may cause the warts to die. With another method, the patient gets shots of interferon to boost the body’s immune system. This gives the body the ability to fight the virus.

