

Plantar Warts

Papilloma, Verruca Plantaris

What's the problem?

A plantar wart is a small skin lesion that resembles a callus and appears on the bottom of the foot or toes. Sometimes a single larger wart is surrounded by many smaller warts. In this case, they are called mosaic warts.



How does it feel?

A plantar wart feels like a lump under the foot. They are only painful if they are squeezed or pinched from side to side, or if you bear direct weight on them. Warts on other parts of the body, such as the hands, grow elevated above the skin's surface. We bear weight on warts on the bottom of the foot, so they get flattened and pushed into the skin. Most people liken this to walking with a rock attached to the foot, as the thickened callous tissue becomes hard and painful as it gets bigger.



How did this happen?

All warts are caused by the Papilloma virus, a slow growing virus which invades the skin. The viruses are common in all of our environments and they don't readily grow on intact skin. If there is a break in the skin, like a scratch or thorn penetration, this gives the virus the opportunity to get in and start growing.

How is it diagnosed?

Your podiatrist can usually diagnose a plantar wart based on a characteristic appearance alone. When the doctor trims the hard callus tissue from the surface of the wart, a pattern of small black dots that are actually small blood vessels that feed the wart, is usually seen. The doctor may also take a sample of skin and analyze it under a microscope.

How can I care for myself?

If you have good blood flow, good feeling in your feet and the wart is small, you can try over the counter products that contain the ingredient salicylic acid. People with Diabetes or other people with numbness or bad circulation should not use these products, as it can be dangerous for them. Consult with your doctor for treatment options. You do not have to treat warts, especially if they are not painful. They generally will go away on their own, but it can take months or even a few years.

Can I have them removed?

Patients often ask if they can just have them removed, or "cut out". We call this **curretage** and yes it is an option. We generally recommend against this if possible as it has the added risks of a scar on the bottom of the foot (which can be painful), infection, and creates a wound on the bottom of the foot. The benefits are few, as having a wart removed surgically does not offer added benefits or prevent it from coming back. It is a quicker treatment only.

How will my doctor care for me?

You have a number of choices for treating your Plantar Warts including freezing the wart, using topical medications or using injections. You may try different medications until the wart is resolved. Unfortunately, warts are

stubborn and even with the best methods for removing them, they have a high rate of coming back, around 15%.

At home:

For home remedies or prescription remedies to have a better chance at success, it is important to control the amount of callus overlying the wart so the medication can work. This is done in the office with a scalpel and is not painful. At home, you can use an emery board (nail file) or pumice stone.

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