

Don't Let Warts Slow You Down



by Eunice Ramsey-Parker, DPM, MPH
Clinic Administrator,
Foot Center of New York

Warts are common skin growths that can appear on the hands (palmar warts) or on the bottoms of feet (plantar warts). They are the result of a virus, specifically the human papilloma virus (HPV), which has entered the skin through

cracks in dry skin or via tiny cuts or scrapes. (Different types of HPV affect different parts of the body.) The virus thrives in warm and moist conditions, so walking barefoot in locker rooms or around swimming pools is a routine way of contracting it. Plantar warts are usually small and can feel rough, grainy and hard, and little black dots can be seen within them. Children and teens are most likely to develop plantar warts, and this is the time of year when they tend to appear after the virus is contracted during a summer of communal activities in playgrounds, camps, parks and pools.

Warts should be treated -- without treatment they can spread.

While there are plenty of home treatments for plantar warts on the market, there are even more reasons to see the podiatrist: for example, if the patient has diabetes, PAD, HIV/AIDS or another immune system disorder; if you've tried to treat it at home, but the wart persisted, returned or multiplied; or if you're not sure if the growth is a wart. Home treatments with strong chemicals that can destroy the virus can also destroy healthy tissue; destroying the wart is really best left to podiatrists. Diabetics should never self-treat.

What would a podiatrist do? First the doctor would determine if the growth is indeed a wart, and if it is, then decide on an appro-

priate course of treatment that will kill the virus, either via simple surgery with local anesthesia or cautery, or by prescribing a medication to apply daily. The doctor will also determine if the location of the wart and pain associated with it have caused changes in gait and then suggest exercises or shoe inserts to correct it. Checking children's feet periodically is a good way to head off pain or problems caused by warts.

Dr. Eunice V. Ramsey-Parker, DPM, MPH, is Clinic Administrator of the Foot Center of New York at 55 East 124th Street between Park and Madison Avenues. Learn more about the Foot Center at www.footcenterofnewyork.org.

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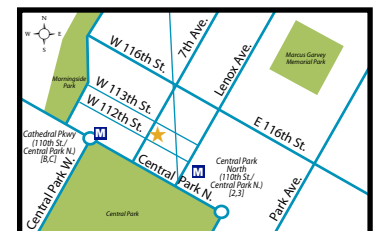
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