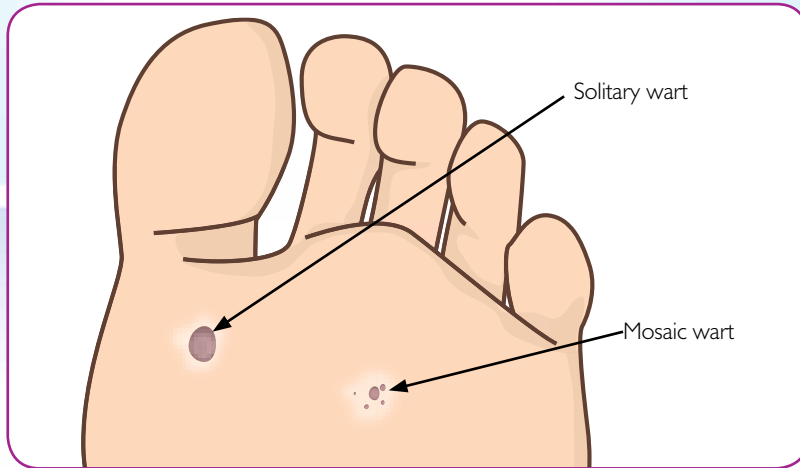


VERRUCAE



WHAT IS IT?

A verruca (also known as a plantar wart) is a viral infection of the skin on the bottom of the foot. A verruca is caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). An infection is often caused by sharing shoes, towels or walking barefoot in communal areas such as

swimming pools or by skin to skin contact. Verrucae can be painful if they are situated in an area of high pressure for example the heel or the head of the 1st metatarsal (the ball of the foot).

DIAGNOSIS

The most common issue with diagnosing a verruca is distinguishing between a corn and a verruca. Although it is a crude test, a verruca is painful if you pinch it, rather than pushing it. A corn hurts when you push it. Verrucae often have a very distinctive appearance. They are flat, have a cauliflower type

shape and often small black dots can be seen inside the centre. These dots are blood vessels that the virus uses to survive. Due to these blood vessels, a verruca is very likely to bleed slightly if some of the overlying skin is removed with a scalpel which can also make it easy to identify.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Verrucae are notoriously difficult to kill. Some verrucae will disappear of their own accord and others will take months or even years. Also verrucae will respond differently to treatments so what works with one patient may not work as well with another. A podiatrist will most often use acid (salicylic acid) at anywhere between 40-70% depending on your skin condition. This acid looks like soft wax and they will apply a tiny amount to the verruca which will treat the tissue in the affected area. This acid is easily washed away by

water therefore once the acid is in place it is really important that you keep the area totally dry for a week. It can sting for a couple of days but is usually bearable. Other treatments include cryotherapy (freezing) which is usually delivered as a spray that freezes the tissue and kills the virus inside. This can also be painful but can be effective. Cryotherapy and acid use have occasionally been known to cause blistering or some scar tissue to form over the treated area. You should discuss the options with your podiatrist, who will take your skin type,

Continued overleaf

TREATMENT OPTIONS CONTINUED

activity levels, general health and healing capabilities into account before deciding on a treatment plan. Filing the wart and applying duct tape to the area, marigold therapy and banana skin therapy have also been reported to work in some cases. One important factor commonly associated with the incidence of verrucae in patients is stress and its associated immune deficiency. Quite often, a

reported reduction in stress levels by a patient will coincide with the disappearance of their plantar warts. Preventing a verruca is quite easy. If you avoid walking barefoot as much as possible in public bathing areas and avoid sharing footwear and towels with others, then the likelihood of picking up an infection is drastically reduced.

GENERAL FOOTCARE ADVICE

REGULAR WASHING

Feet should be washed daily in warm water and then dried gently with a soft towel. A sprinkling of soothing foot powder is helpful, especially between the toes.

VALUE OF MASSAGE

Massage will help tone up circulation and relax the muscles. Try contrast bathing by alternatively dipping the feet first in comfortably hot water for one minute and then cold water for twenty seconds for a total of ten minutes. Always finish with the cold dip.

CUT TOE NAILS REGULARLY

Keep toe nails trimmed to just over the tip of the toe and cut them straight across. Never cut around the corners as this may lead to ingrowing toe nails. Cut them at least once per month.