

Verrucae

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Introduction

Verrucae, or foot warts, are generally found on the bottom surface of the foot.

Appearance of the verruca

- A verruca looks similar to a corn but has a coarse roughened surface, often with black dots.
- It is usually surrounded by hard skin, and not well defined.
- The colour is usually paler than the usual tone of the skin.
- A verruca is approximately 1cm in diameter, but can be larger.
- It may have many small verrucae surrounding it.



What causes verrucae?

- All verrucae are caused by the human papilloma virus.
- Excessive moisture or dryness of the skin can lead to small cracks on the surface. This can give the virus the opportunity to enter the skin.
- You are more likely to catch a verruca in places where you go bare foot. For example, swimming pools, showers or changing rooms.

What are the symptoms?

- Verrucae often feel like small stones under the foot.
- They are not usually painful unless squeezed from the sides, or direct force is applied to them.
- They can spread to other areas of the foot, and sometimes to the hands.

How are they treated?

- Verrucae are difficult to treat effectively. Generally they will disappear without treatment within 6-12 months, but sometimes this may take longer due to the body's own immune response to the virus.
- Regular filing of the overlying callus (thickened skin) with a foot file will help reduce pressure.
- Applying a pad to take pressure away from the verruca can help.
- Try to keep the verruca covered, as it will help to prevent the spread of infection.
- Over-the-counter products may be of benefit, but contain a strong acid, which can lead to damage of the surrounding healthy skin.

Diabetics and people with poor circulation should not use these products.

- Other treatments are available from your doctor, such as freezing the verrucae. This method can be painful and may cause permanent scarring.

The verruca will eventually go and will leave the person with a certain degree of immunity. However, re-occurrence is possible.

Contact details for Royal Devon Podiatry Service

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PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, please contact:

PALS Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter

- call 01392 402093 or email rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in Wonford, Exeter.

PALS North Devon

- call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at the North Devon District Hospital in Barnstaple.

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