

## Information on Verrucae



The majority of us at some stage in our lives develop a foot complaint. One of the most common complaints seen in practice is that of verrucas, especially amongst children and young adults.

### What is a verruca?

A verruca is caused by a virus which belongs to a group of viruses called the human papilloma virus commonly abbreviated to HPV. There are several types of verrucas that affect the foot.

### How do I get a verruca?

The virus affects an individual by entering the skin through a cut, abrasion or simply a blister. Once the virus enters the cut it begins to multiply.

The HP virus is commonly transmitted in places with moisture, such as: swimming pools, communal showers, steam rooms or gymnasiums. The HP virus is **highly contagious**. It is likely to pass from one individual to another from walking bare foot on damp surfaces.

### What do verrucas look like?

Verrucas commonly appear on the soles of the feet and toes, very rarely the tops of the feet or hands.

They appear as a patch or lump of darkened brown skin with a rough surface. Often they are surrounded by white skin and some can present with hard skin over the top.

Verrucae vary in size and shape and can appear in single form or in multiple groups. The virus will invade your skin cells and may grow rapidly if inappropriate treatment is undertaken.

Verrucas can be painful to walk on, however they are characteristically painful if squeezed from the sides.



### Does my body fight off the virus?

As a verruca is caused by a virus the body's natural defence system may try to eradicate it. This may be the case for some children; however in adults generally the immune system may not be able to kill the virus on its own thereby leaving it to grow. The majority of patients with a verruca need some help to treat it.

Although research suggests that occasionally the verruca may disappear spontaneously without treatment, this may take several years if at all.

### Treatments

There are a few treatment options available to you if you have a verruca.

The treatment options will vary according to the length of time the verruca has been there, the size, whether it is single or in a group and also whether the verruca is painful to walk on.

If you have a verruca it is best to visit your podiatrist for further information on the treatments, however some are listed below.

- Creams /Gels sold from chemists
- Acids
- Freezing
- Dry Needling
- Minor Surgery

### **Creams**

There are many creams or gels sold locally over the counter at chemists or from your podiatrist. These methods are used to try and gently burn the verruca away. They can be useful in people with no other underlying health complaints who have a small single verruca. They can also act as an option for a healthy child who presents with a small single verruca that has been present for a short period of time. These creams and gels have a low percentage of acids used to treat the verruca and, therefore, may not be strong enough.

### **Acids**

Another common treatment is the application of certain acids onto the foot. The acid commonly used by podiatrists is salicylic acid at different strengths. The acid is placed in a secure pad on the foot and you are advised to leave this pad on for several days. This method of treatment rarely

causes discomfort and is very effective in destroying the verruca.

### **Cryotherapy**

There is a method of freezing which is very effective to treat verrucas and is called Cryotherapy. This is a common procedure, simple and with minimal discomfort. It is similar to placing an ice cube on your foot and holding there for several seconds. This method is very safe and widely used for all children and adults.

### **Dry Needling**

A relatively new treatment that is effective in removing persistent verrucas in adults. It is said to be 90% successful. The goal for this procedure is to introduce verruca cells into the circulatory system to facilitate an immune-generated response. This procedure is very minor, although it does involve the administration of a local anaesthetic. It is no more painful than receiving a local anaesthetic at the dentist. To find out more information about this procedure, please contact the clinic.

### **Electro-surgery**

Electro-surgery is often considered for persistent verrucas. With this procedure again a local anaesthetic is injected to numb your foot. The verruca is then removed using an electrical

probe. Your foot is then dressed appropriately and you will require several weeks recovery.

All of the treatments performed are considered to be effective methods available for treating verrucas. If you have a verruca, it is best to have it treated as soon as you notice it. The longer you have had the verruca the longer it will take to resolve. Although, do not fear, with these treatments the success rate is very high!

**Please feel free to call us.....**

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