



Warts

Warts are skin growths caused by a virus. Common and flat warts are seen most often in younger children and plantar warts in school-aged children.

School health and childcare provider information

Cause

Human papillomavirus

Symptoms

Common – Dome-shaped and have a rough appearance. They usually grow on the fingers, on the backs of the hands, and around or under the nails but may be more common where skin is broken (e.g., bitten fingernails or picked hangnails). Black dots in a wart are produced by broken blood vessels.

Plantar (foot) – Usually seen on the bottoms of the feet. Most of these warts flatten because the pressure of walking pushes them back into the skin. They can be very painful. They may also have black dots.

Flat – Smaller and smoother than other warts. They tend to grow in large numbers (20 to 100) at a time and can grow anywhere. In children they are most common on the face and extremities. They are found in the beard area of men and on the legs of women.

Spread

Spread from person to person through close contact, sometimes indirectly from contaminated objects, such as locker room floors, showers, or pool decks. The virus more easily enters the body through an area of skin that is moist, peeling, or cracked.

Incubation

It can take from several months to years for symptoms to begin.

Contagious period

Unknown; probably as long as the wart is present.

Exclusion

Childcare and school

None.

Warts

Diagnosis

Recommend parents/guardians call their health care provider.

Treatment

Based on the type of wart.

Prevention

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after touching the warts of an infected person. Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
- Discourage children from biting their nails or picking their hangnails or warts if they have them.
- Encourage students to do basic first aid when they have an injury (e.g., cut or scrape), if appropriate for age group.
- Encourage children to wear shower shoes (e.g., flip-flops or water sandals) in locker rooms and showers or on pool decks.
- Do not allow sharing of personal items such as towels, razors, or nail clippers.

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.

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