

Chelsea Skin & Laser answers questions about warts.

What are warts?

A wart is a small, skin growth often resembling a cauliflower or blister. It typically occurs on the hands or feet, but can develop in other locations. Warts are caused by a viral infection, specifically one of the many types of *human papillomavirus (HPV)*. The virus causes the top layer of skin to grow rapidly forming the wart or a cluster of warts. There are many varieties of warts; most are considered harmless. Warts are contagious. They typically disappear after a few months but can last for years and, since they are caused by a virus in the body, can recur.

There are many varieties of warts.

- **Common warts** grow anywhere on the body but the hands and feet are most common. They are rough, shaped like an arch, and may be gray-brown in color.
- **Plantar warts** grow on the feet. They are hard, thick patches of skin with dark specks. They may be painful when you walk or you may feel like you are stepping on a stone.
- **Flat warts** usually grow on the face, arms, or legs. They are small, have flat tops, and can be pink, light brown, or light yellow.
- **Filiform warts** usually grow around the mouth, nose, or beard area. They are the same color as your skin and have growths that look like threads sticking out of them.
- **Periungual warts** grow under and around the toenails and fingernails. They look like rough bumps with an uneven border and can affect nail growth.
- **Genital warts**, often transmitted during intimate contact, are skin growths in the groin, genital, or anal areas. They can be of varying sizes and shapes. Some look like flat white patches, and others are bumpy like tiny bunches of cauliflower. Sometimes you can't see the warts on the surface of the skin or they may be internal. In either case, the virus can still be spread during skin-to-skin contact. There are different strains, some are considered low risk while other high risk types have been linked to cervical or rectal cancer.

How are warts spread?

Warts are easily spread by direct contact and usually enter the body in an area of broken skin or skin-to-skin contact. The wart virus can be spread by sharing towels, razors, or other personal items. It can take many months of slow growth beneath the skin before you notice a wart. Some people are more likely to get warts than others.

How are warts diagnosed?

Chelsea Skin & Laser is your best source to diagnose and treat warts. We can often tell if a skin growth is a wart by looking at it. Sometimes a skin biopsy is taken if it is not clear that the growth is a wart, if a skin growth is darker than the skin around it, irregular, bleeds, or is large and fast-growing.

Will my insurance cover treatment of my warts?

Most do but not all insurances cover the treatment or removal of warts. Call your insurance company to inquire as to coverage, copay, coinsurance and deductible.

How are they treated?

Some warts don't need treatment. If you have warts that are painful or spreading there are treatment options:

- At home drugstore topical treatment. Available without a prescription. Less effective than medical treatments and take time.
- Chelsea Skin & Laser will prescribe a medical grade topical cream or inject it with a wart solution called Bleomycin.
- Cryotherapy: effectively freezing the wart.
- Removing the wart surgically or with electrocautery.
- The "duct tape method." Takes time and constant attention; sometimes effective.

Wart treatments are not guaranteed to work and warts may come back or spread to other parts of the body. Most treatments destroy the visible growth but cannot be always kill the hidden, microscopic virus that causes the wart.

<http://www.chelseaskincenterblog.com/ugh-i-think-i-have-a-wart/>