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A Guide to Verruca and Treatment

Podiatry & Orthotics Directorate

What is a Verruca?

It is a wart caused by the Human Papilloma virus.

Warts on the foot are known as verruca pedis (*'pedis' - of the foot*).

Verruca can occur on any part of the skin. Warts on the soles of the feet may be painful and appear different to those on the hand as a result of the pressure from standing or walking.

What do Verrucas look like?

A number of different types of verrucas exist.

They can occur as a single wart or in clusters.

The wart can be identified by interrupting the lines of skin forming the finger and toe prints, often appearing to 'cauliflower' through the skin. Small blood vessels may be visible as pink or black dots within the wart. These are not 'roots'.

Skilled observation is required to distinguish a verruca from a corn or a foreign body.

There is a simple diagnostic test that may determine the presence of a verruca or a corn:

Pain experienced on applying pressure to the top of the area is likely to indicate that a corn is present.

Pain experienced on light pressure to both sides of the area toward the centre is likely to indicate that a verruca is present.

Where do they come from?

A verruca is a viral infection that can survive in damp conditions such as changing room floors, gym floors and swimming baths. It can enter the skin via tiny cracks which are open in moist conditions. The virus may spread.

The body should fight infection just as it would with the common cold and will eventually build up its own immunity to the infection. In most cases, when resistance is fully developed, the verruca should disappear.

What should I do about it?

Without any treatment verruca usually disappear in 18 to 24 months. Should a verruca become painful or spread seek advice from your Doctor or a Podiatrist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) who will advise on available treatments.

What treatments are available?

If a verruca is painful it is usually due to a build up of hard skin. This can be relieved by rubbing it with a file or pumice stone while the skin is softened and moist.

Various treatments are available which aim to kill the virus by destroying the infected skin cells.

Over the counter treatments are readily available from your local Pharmacist. Should a verruca persist after over the counter treatments have been tried please seek advice from your Doctor or a Podiatrist who will advise.

Should I be excluded from sports and swimming activities?

There is no reason why such activities should not continue, unless advised by your Podiatrist or Doctor.

To reduce the possibility of transference, it may be useful to consider the following which act as effective physical barriers:

- Keep the verruca covered with a waterproof plaster so that it does not come into contact with floor surfaces
- Wear verruca socks during swimming or games

References:

NICE Guidelines www.cks.nhs.uk/warts_and_verrucae/management

www.patient.co.uk/health/Warts-and-Verrucas.htm

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**