

WARTS AND VERRUCAS

Warts, (and warts which are pushed inwards on the soles of feet- verrucas) are a common symptom, and the very fact that you are attending the doctor today suggests that self-care measures have not worked.

Self-care measures mean the simple things that you can buy over the counter which should be used assiduously. Applying the lotions, creams, drops etc. every day and rubbing the wart down with a pumice stone to remove dead skin, and not allowing the medication to penetrate further is essential before you write off these treatments.

This is all the more important because really there is very little else that works.

The problem with warts is that they are caused by a particularly low grade non-irritating virus, which invades the skin and provokes very little immune response by the body. The wart virus simply sits there and is so quiet, calm and placid that it doesn't irritate the body or the body's immune system. This means that the normal immune system which fights off viral infections never quite gets round to mounting a response against the wart. It is also known that between the ages of 5 and 10 years, the immune system is particularly indifferent to the wart virus, which is why they tend to occur more often in this age group.

The bad news is that nothing else really works.

There are two ways of not getting rid of warts, not getting rid of them painfully or not getting rid of them painlessly.

Not getting rid of them *painfully* includes operating on them, burning them or freezing them. This gives a lot of pain, only for the wart to come back.

Not getting rid of them *painlessly* involves either doing nothing and waiting for the wart to go away, or trying to use some form of occlusion that is covering the wart. In fact, in a rather nice piece of research it was found that putting Duck or 'Gaffer' tape over the wart and making sure it stayed there for six days (reapplying it if it fell off) and then removing and rubbing down the wart with a pumice stone or emery board before reapplying more Duck tape was more effective than having the wart frozen off. Not only was it more effective, it was also painless.

It might therefore be worth trying this method of Duck tape for six days, and rub down with emery board for a total of four weeks, as an alternative and more comfortable treatment than others available.

Invariably the body eventually gets round to recognising that there is a foreign virus which has invaded the skin, and will at last mount an immune response which will lead to destruction of the wart. This can take months or even years, but it does inevitably take place.

Warts are a nuisance and certainly 25% can be got rid of by the sort of medication you can buy from the chemist. The rest will stay until the body eliminates them and they could stay with pain (cautery burning, surgery or freezing) or without pain, ignoring and trying the Duck tape.

I am afraid that is the bad news about warts.