Treatment for Warts on the Hands and Feet

What causes warts?
Warts are caused by a virus called HPV (Human Papilloma Virus). There are more than 80 types of the HPV virus that cause warts. These viruses spread very easily from person to person. Some people’s immune systems fight off the viruses while others do not.

How does lifestyle contribute to warts?
Smoking causes some wart types to grow quickly and makes them harder to treat. A poor diet can also affect wart growth. When working well, our immune system – the part of the body that fights infections and illness – helps us fight off warts.

What over-the-counter methods can I use to treat warts?
If used exactly as directed, many over-the-counter treatments work well. The most common ones contain salicylic (sal-uh-sil-ik) acid. This medicine comes in liquid, gel, and lotion and on patches or sticks. To treat the wart:
1. First, use a pumice stone to take off any dead tissue.
2. Then apply a drop of the liquid/gel/patch to the top of the wart.
3. It may take up to 12 weeks to get rid of the wart. You may feel “burning” at the site of the wart.

Who should not do salicylic acid treatment?
This over-the-counter treatment should not be used for:
- Children under 2 years of age
- Persons allergic to aspirin
- Persons who have diabetes or poor circulation in the legs
- Women who are breastfeeding or pregnant should ask their doctor before trying this treatment.

Using duct tape is a low cost treatment that can also be used.
- First cut a piece of duct (adhesive) tape as close to the size of the wart as you can.
- Place this on top of the wart.
- Leave the tape in place for 6 days.
- If the tape falls off before the end of 6 days, put on a new piece.
- After 6 days, take the tape off and soak the wart in water.
- Gently rub the wart with an emery board or pumice stone.
- Leave the tape off over night.
- Do this process again until the wart is gone or 2 months have passed.

What should I do if the over-the-counter medicine does not work?
Your doctor has several ways to treat warts, including:
- Freezing the wart with very low temperatures (cryosurgery)
- Burning the wart with electricity (electrocautery)
- Injection (shot) therapy
- Using prescription medication to the top of the wart.

These treatments cause an open sore for 7 to 10 days. Scarring at the site of the wart can also occur.

Are there any other choices?
Candida antigen – a form of yeast – has been used to check a patient’s immune system.
- Candida antigen (killed yeast) injections do not treat warts.
- Candida antigen, when shot into the wart by a doctor, tests the immune system.
- A healthy immune system will find the yeast and remove it and the wart tissue from the body.
- The killed yeast is placed into a solution that is injected under the skin of the wart.
In a few days, a healthy immune system will cause a red reaction – like a mosquito bite. If it does not, the immune system is not working well.

What happens after you get the injection?
- There may be some itching at the site and sometimes a blister.
- Often the warts turn somewhat black and the crust falls out.
- You may also see a rash (hives).
- You may need up to 3 injections, one month apart, to get rid of the warts.
- If you notice a rash or hives, please call your doctor.

Prevention – Tips on avoiding the HP Virus
The only way to prevent warts is to avoid contact with the virus that causes warts. If you are in contact with the virus, you may or may not develop warts.
- Avoid touching warts on yourself or others.
- Do not share razors, towels, socks or shoes with another person. Someone with no visible warts can still be carrying the virus.
- Avoid walking barefoot on warm, wet surfaces where the wart virus may be alive. Wear shower shoes when using public showers, locker rooms, or pool area.
- Keep your feet dry. If your feet sweat heavily, wear socks that absorb moisture or wick it away from the skin.
- Avoid irritating the soles of your feet. Warts grow more easily if you skin has been injured or broken in some way.

Tips on how to prevent warts from spreading
Keep warts covered with a bandage or athletic tape. Do not bite your nails or cuticles, as this may spread warts from one finger to another.

Wart treatment is not always successful. Even after a wart shrinks or disappears, warts may return or spread to other parts of the body. This is because most treatments only destroy the wart and do not kill the virus that causes the wart.