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PODIATRY DEPARTMENT



VERRUCAE

VERRUCAE

Verrucae are small lumps that often develop on the skin of the feet. They are caused by the human papilloma wart virus (HPV), and can be passed on through skin to skin contact.

Verrucae are usually harmless, and can resolve on their own, but in some cases may take months or even years to disappear. They tend to last longer in older children and adults.

SYMPTOMS AND APPEARANCE

Verrucae are usually round or oval shaped, and have a rough, irregular surface similar to a cauliflower. The affected area of skin will be white, often with black dots in the centre. They can sometimes be painful if they occur on a weight-bearing part of the foot. Hard skin can develop on top of the lesion, further increasing the discomfort. There may be one verruca or multiple clusters.

HOW VERRUCAE ARE SPREAD

The HPV virus can be passed on through close skin to skin contact and also be transmitted by contact with contaminated objects such as towels, shoes, communal changing areas. The virus is more likely to spread if the skin is wet, or abrasions are present.

TREATMENT

There are a number of treatments available, however no single treatment is 100% effective and the verruca may return. In the first instance, avoid touching or scratching the verruca, as this may result in further spread of the virus.

Salicylic Acid - gels, medicated plasters and paints are available from your local pharmacy. Care should always be taken to ensure medication is applied directly over the lesion, to avoid damage to healthy surrounding skin. Check with your pharmacist before use, as this treatment is not recommended for people with certain medical conditions.

Cryotherapy – Liquid nitrogen is applied to the verruca to freeze and destroy the affected skin cells. After treatment, a blister forms, followed by a scab, which then falls off 7-10 days later. This treatment is offered at some GP surgeries or hospital skin clinics.

Other treatments include silver nitrate, acupuncture, laser therapy. Also applying zinc oxide tape or Duct tape over the verruca to occlude the lesion. Filing the overlying hard/dry skin with disposable emery board can also help to stimulate the body's immune system to fight the infection.

HOW CAN I PREVENT THEM?

Most people will have a wart of verruca at some point in their life. However you can reduce your risk of further spread by doing the following -

Keep your feet dry.
Change your socks daily.
Always wear appropriate footwear e.g. flip-flops when in communal areas.
Do not share towels, socks or shoes.

If you already have a verruca, ensure the lesion is covered, and wear protective verruca socks to reduce risk of passing on the virus when swimming.

FURTHER INFORMATION/ADVICE

If your verruca bleeds, changes in appearance, becomes unusually painful, or the surrounding skin becomes inflamed, or damaged, then you should contact your GP practice/podiatrist for further advice.

Please note - NHS Fife Podiatry do not offer routine verruca treatment.