

- **SWIFT treatment** – This is a microwave treatment that creates heat shock to the skin to destabilise the viral defence chemicals and enable the body's immune system to attack.
- **Needling** – the procedure is carried out under local anaesthetic to make it painless. A needle is used to create repeated trauma to the verruca tissue. The aim is to disturb the deeper infected cells and stimulate a quicker response from the immune system.
- **Surgical Excision** – This treatment is carried out by a Podiatric Surgeon or Dermatologist. This would be the last resort if all else has failed.

#### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email [whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your needs.

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## VERRUCAE

### A patient's guide



## What is a verruca?

A verruca is a viral skin infection of the outer layer of skin caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). It can also be referred to as a plantar wart.

They are the same as warts that appear on other parts of the body, but they look flatter due to their location. There may be tiny black dots within the hard build up. They can be painful, itchy and embarrassing.

They can occur as a single lesion or multiply lesions.

## Are they contagious?

As this is caused by a virus the likelihood of passing it on to others is possible. However, you need to have close to close skin contact to be able to pass it directly. The risk of acquiring a verruca is higher if you have certain conditions which suppress your immunity, have damaged skin or remain in wet conditions for prolonged periods. They can also spread to other parts of the body.

## How did I acquire a verruca?

The HPV can survive months to years on surfaces. Most people tend to become exposed to the virus in gyms and swimming pools. Once the virus has entered the skin, there is an incubation period of around 1 to 20 months. Your body's immune system will try to fight off the infection, but if it is unable to, a verruca will develop.

## Can they be treated?

Verruca can be treated but the methods can vary from person to person. Any infection that enters the body would normally be fought off by the body's immune system. The HPV is different in that it disguises itself so it can go unnoticed by the body's own defence system.

Verrucae are harmless and may resolve themselves if left, but if the lesion has been present for several years, you would need to seek professional advice.

## Treatment

- **Oral Zinc tablets** – Research suggests that increasing your Zinc intake can help boost the immunity and help ward off such viruses.
- **Cryotherapy** – the lesion is frozen using liquid nitrogen at extremely cold temperatures. The aim is to force the verruca to come away. This can be painful and cause blistering.  
NICE guidelines mean that the NHS no longer offers this treatment as the data does not show it to be sufficiently effective (under 45-50%).
- **Home treatments** – application of an acid-based preparation to the area – EG Bazooka or Verrugon. Some professionals may apply higher concentrations of acid to the area, but this will mean weekly appointments for dressings and keeping the area/foot dry between applications.  
**Taping** – Patients are often advised to try covering the area with Duct Tape. Please note this has not been researched or scientifically proven to work. It is industrial and NOT designed for skin use. Keeping moisturise in allows the verruca to remain soft and more comfortable to walk on.