

North Carolina Dermatology Associates, PLLC
7920 ACC Blvd., Suite 100
Raleigh, NC 27617
Ph# 919-596-9600

Wart Treatment Handout for Patients

We are treating you for warts, a very common, benign (non-serious) skin virus that affects a majority of people at some point in their lives. Your own immune system will usually get rid of this viral infection, given enough time, anywhere from 6 months to 2 years. In the meantime, our techniques will make your wart(s) smaller and stimulate your body's immune cells to clear up the viral particles left over after treatment. Although the warts are not easily spread to others, the virus can get passed to others through direct contact or indirect contact such as locker rooms and public showers. The warts can also spread on the same person by picking and scratching, especially on your hands, so avoid "picking" them. We recommend treating warts that are bothersome, painful, or rapidly multiplying.

TREATMENT METHODS

___ **Liquid Nitrogen** (freezing or "cryotherapy") a very cold substance has been sprayed on your wart(s). Treated areas usually swell, become red and slightly sore for a few days. Occasionally a blister may form at the treated sites. Leave the blister alone, cover with Vaseline and a band aid; you may leave it uncovered, if it is in a protected area of the body. If the blister becomes large, tense, and painful insert clean pin and drain. Don't remove the blister itself.

In about 1-2 weeks, the scab will fall off and the skin in the treated area will remain pink for a few weeks. The area may also appear lighter than the surrounding skin. This may persist and is normal consequence of this procedure. Rarely, nothing happens. This usually means your skin is unusually resistant to the freezing. On your return visits, we will freeze more vigorously or use another method. It is not uncommon for warts having to be frozen 5-7 times. We spray warts every 3-4 weeks until clear.

___ **40% salicylic acid (or a compound with salicylic acid and/or lactic acid)** - a mainstay of most treatment methods to keep the wart(s) flat and not callused so the other topical penetrate better. This method alone is very good to eradicate small warts in children.

- We recommend the Wart Stick. This is available at the Walgreens in Brier Creek at the corner of Brier Creek Parkway and Vogel Street. (11801 Vogel Street, Raleigh, NC 27617). Note: All Walgreens do not carry this product.
- Alternatives include Dr. Scholl's Clear Away pads or Mediplast pads that have the acid on self adhesive band-aids. Because these pads do not stick very well to fingers we the Wart Stick.
- Apply these products EVERY NIGHT, ideally after a shower or a quick warm soak in water. Keep 40% salicylic acid medication in place for 12 hours, removing and changing if area(s) get wet. We recommend occluding the area with duct tape following application of medication.
- The wart area(s) will turn whitish and soften with regular use. Use disposable emery boards (about \$1 a pack) to rub off the softened wart tissue before reapplying another acid treatment. You should stay with this method for 1-2 months in order to remove the wart(s) completely. We also advise you to use this method to soften very thick or callused warts during treatment with the other topical methods on this handout.

___ **Carac or Efudex Cream**- This topical chemotherapeutic cream is usually used for small pre-cancers on the face. We use it on stubborn warts resistant to other treatments. The cream works best on soft warts so use the 40% salicylic acid method first if your warts are thick or callused. Rub a small amount of the cream on each wart at bedtime. Cover with duct tape, if you have been instructed to do so. Wash off with soap and water in the morning, and apply salicylic acid (you may also reverse these and use salicylic acid treatment overnight and apply Efudex in the morning). If the area becomes very irritated and uncomfortable, stop the cream until the discomfort resolves, then restart. This method can take up to 3 months of diligent use to work.

____ **Aldara**- This cream is an immune modifier and stimulates your own body's immune cells to clear up the viral cells. The cream works best on soft warts so use the 40% salicylic acid method first (or during Aldara treatment) if your warts are thick or callused. Rub a small amount of the cream on each wart at bedtime. Cover with white tape, an occlusive band aid, or duct tape, if you have been instructed to do so. Wash off with soap and water in the morning. Open the small packet by using a safety pin in the top and reseal reinserting the pin. You may reuse the packet until it is empty. You may use the salicylic acid throughout the day.

If the area becomes very irritated and uncomfortable, stop the cream until the discomfort resolves, then restart. This method can take up to 3 months of diligent use to work but it offers the best chance of clearing the warts with minimal recurrence.

____ **Cantharone /Cantharone Plus**- The normal action of these medications is to form a blister (or irritation) with some severe itching or redness underneath the wart(s). Blister formation kills the wart virus by cutting off its blood supply. Occasionally there may be some blood in the blister fluid. Don't be alarmed- this is a normal part of the treatment process.

Wash area with soap and water or a shower, after 4-6 hours. Protect the area with a loose band aid for the next few days. Sometimes the blister may become quite painful. You may take Tylenol or Advil if this occurs. If the blister is quite tense, you may pinprick it to let the fluid out. Treat any signs of wart regrowth with 40% Salicylic Acid (see above).

Don't be alarmed if the warts seem to have spread a little. This can be seen from time to time. The new areas will be treated at your next office visit.

____ **Duct Tape**- An effective, cheap and painless, method. A study was published in two medical journals in which patients wore duct tape over their warts for 6 out of 7 days each week. On this 7th day, they would remove the tape, soak the warts in warm water, and then use a rough emery board to scrape off the dead tissue. The tape was reapplied the next morning. This treatment continued for a maximum 2 months or until the warts resolved. The irritation and occlusion from the tape apparently stimulate an immune response that resolves the viral infection. One pediatric dermatologist combines a 40% salicylic acid treatment with the duct tape occlusion for even better results, adding the acid on a daily or nightly basis.

TIP: For those with plantar warts (warts on the bottom of your feet): Buy Dr. Scholl's MoleFoam. Cut a patch of foam with a donut hole on the center the size of your wart. Place MoleFoam over the wart with the wart sticking up through the hole so your weight is on the foam donut and not on the wart. Use this on all your plantar warts throughout your treatment to minimize callus formation and decrease discomfort.

Note: We treat molluscum with several of the same treatment methods as warts follow the above instructions. Molluscum are also caused by a virus but this is one related to the pox virus and not HPV, the human papilloma virus, the cause of common warts.

We strongly advise you to keep your follow up appointments, usually 2-4 weeks apart, as diligent, regular treatments are the best way to get rid of this viral infection.

For more info visit: <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/warts.html>