

MSAD # 13 / RSU #83

Health Alert

Warts

Important Notice to Parents

Warts are caused by more than 125 viral types that are the source of skin-colored growths on exposed areas of the skin and mucous membranes. Warts are usually self limited. Their names and appearance depends on the part of the body affected.

Some warts are called genital, plantar, oral, flat, facial or filiform, common, and periungual warts. They may be smooth and flat such as plantar (foot) warts are usually seen on the bottoms of the feet. Most of these warts flatten because the pressure of walking pushes them back into the skin. They can be very painful. Flat warts are smaller and smoother than other warts. They tend to grow in large numbers (20 to 100) at a time. They can grow anywhere on the body. Common warts are raised, dome-shaped and have a rough appearance. Check the fingers, on the backs of the hands, and around the nails. They may be more common where a child has bitten fingernails or picked hangnails, Facial warts are elongated and usually found on the face and neck. Common and flat warts are seen most often in younger children and plantar warts in school-aged children.

Warts usually do not hurt, but occasionally can be very painful, especially if secondary infections occur as a result of scratching. New warts may occur in an individual from picking or scratching the initial wart.

Warts are usually transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact with a person who is shedding the virus. The transmitter may or may not have symptoms. Wart viruses are also spread from person to person by touching contaminated objects, such as locker room floors, showers, or pool decks. Genital warts are usually sexually transmitted.

The incubation period for warts is variable, ranging from 1–8 months but may be as long as several years.

The infectious period of warts is unknown. The virus is shed at least as long as visible lesions persist and shedding continues intermittently when warts are not present.

Most warts will disappear spontaneously. Warts may fail to disappear even with repeated treatment and they may recur after an apparent cure. They may be treated with locally applied chemicals, surgery, cautery, or freezing with liquid nitrogen. If warts are persistent, painful or otherwise concerning, call your child's healthcare provider. Your doctor will decide if treatment is needed.

Tips to help prevent warts - Avoid biting your nails or picking your hangnails. Keep nails trimmed. Take care to keep feet and hands clean and dry. Do basic first aid when an injury (cut, scrape, etc.) occurs. Wear shoes like flip-flops or water sandals in locker rooms and showers or on pool decks. Avoid sharing personal items such as razors. Clean and disinfect contaminated areas. Use a product that kills germs/viruses for cleaning.

There is no need for children with warts to remain home from school. They should be instructed not to touch any warts and to wash hands frequently. All warts should be covered while at school.

Please contact the school nurse, Mel Chadbourne, RN if you have any questions. More information is also available at the Maine CDC web site.