

WART TREATMENT CLINIC

Dr. Reed Hogben

At

DERMATOLOGY LASER CENTRE

Gulf Canada Square

315, 401 9 Ave. S.W.

403-263-0661

- Late afternoon, early evening, weekend appointments
- No referral necessary
- Initial assessments in a matter of days

WARTS: FACT OR FICTION? *

*-This pamphlet applies primarily to warts of the feet and hands.

1. Warts are a virus
2. Warts come from playing with frogs
3. Warts are contagious
4. It's a "Planter's Wart"
5. Warts have "roots"
6. Warts go away on their own

1. **Fact.** A wart is a benign growth of the skin, due to infection with a virus.
2. **Fiction.** The virus is named HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) and only infects us. There are over 100 strains, many of which cause warts in different areas of the body. About 7-10% of the population has warts at any given time. Children and young adults are most susceptible, and warts are a little more common in women than men.

3. **Fact.** The virus can enter through breaks in the skin's surface after direct contact with a wart or with recently shed viruses still alive in a warm, moist environment, such as a shower or beside a pool. The time between infection and wart development may be many months. You can reduce your chances of infection by wearing sandals and not biting your nails.
4. **Fiction.** There is no such thing as a planter's wart, although it could be a *plantar* wart - the Latin term designating the sole of the foot. A wart on the bottom of the foot is a ... plantar wart.
5. **Fiction.** HPV has only been found in the two outermost layers of the skin, those that would comprise the "roof" of a typical friction blister. One result of the infection is the widening of the small blood vessels within the wart making them prone to leaking with subsequent clotting. The dark red to black-colored clots are sometimes called roots or "seeds". Because of the constant pressure of walking, plantar warts are often hard and thick and push against the underlying skin.
6. **Partly Fact.** Without treatment warts will resolve in about 50% of cases within a year - two-thirds after two years. However, warts that do not resolve frequently enlarge and spread becoming more difficult to treat. New warts are three times more common in those patients with existing warts. Please refer to the following table for a summary of common wart treatments.

Ultimately, it is a patient's immune system, which will cure their warts, by killing the virus. The wart is like a nest for the virus and the goal of available treatments is to destroy the nest or help your immune system kill the virus or both. *Destructive* treatments remove part of the "home" of the virus while simultaneously causing an irritation, hoping to stimulate an immune system response. *Immunologic* treatments help the immune system in some way.

TREATMENT	HOW IT WORKS	PRO'S	CON'S	COMMENTS
Cover it (e.g. duct tape)	Thins the wart, "steams" the virus	Cheap	Slow	Much better combined with other treatments
Peel it (with over-the-counter acids)	Thins and causes irritation for immune response	Usually painless	Relatively slow	Requires diligent daily use for a few weeks or more
Freeze it	Freezes infected cells with subsequent peeling	Non-scarring if done properly Widely available	Somewhat painful	Liquid Nitrogen best Treatments at 2-3 week intervals
Laser it	Vaporizes infected cells	Non-scarring Painless if used immediately after freezing	Only available at a specialist's office	Treatments at 2-3 week intervals
Burn it (electric cautery)	"Cooks" infected cells with heat	?	Requires a needle Can spread infection Can scar	I don't do it
Cut it out	Attempts to remove the infection	?	Requires a needle Can cause painful scar High failure rate	I don't do it
Blister it (Cantharidin)	Lifts wart off skin	Painless (when applied)	Might hurt later Can double or triple size of wart(s)	An option in young children with few stubborn warts
Inject it (Bleomycin)	Poisons infected cells	Possible cure with 1-3 treatments	Injected by needle Often very painful Sometimes not insured	Best for stubborn solitary warts around fingernails
Immunologic	Helps immune response	Depends on medication	Some can be expensive if not insured	Best when combined with destructive treatments